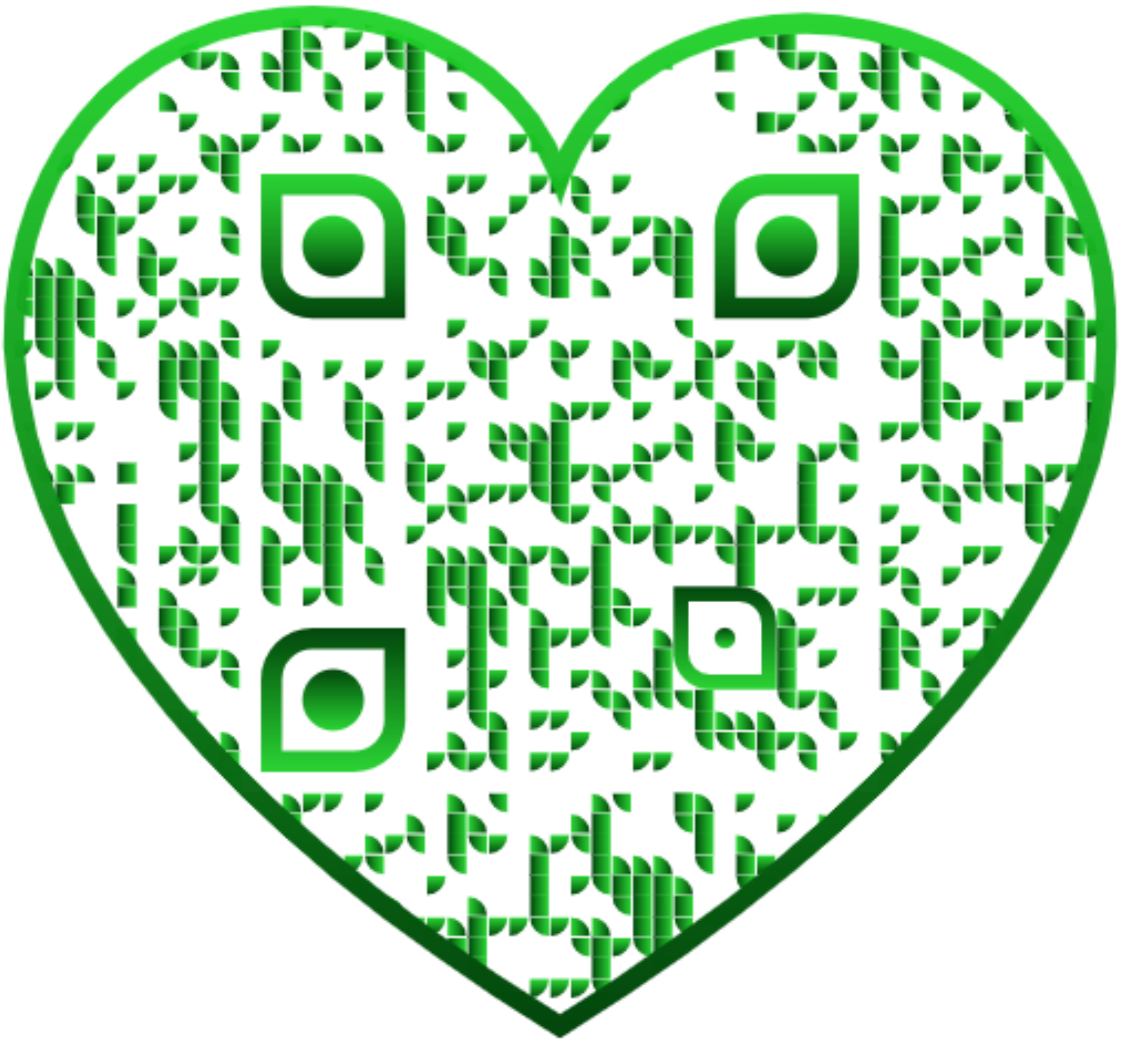
THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF ELVES & DWARFS

Avatars *of* Invisible Realms

CLAUDE LECOUTEUX



THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF ELVES AND DWARFS

Avatars *of* Invisible Realms

CLAUDE LECOUTEUX

Translated by Jon E. Graham

Inner Traditions
Rochester, Vermont

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF ELVES AND DWARFS

"In *The Hidden History of Elves and Dwarfs* Claude Lecouteux's wide-ranging knowledge and insights are focused upon a significant part of European magical tradition and mythology, the realm of what he calls 'lower mythology,' of which the dwarfs are the best-known and most persistent characters. In Northern Tradition mythology, dwarfs are best known for making precious and magical artifacts such as Odin's spear, Thor's hammer, Freya's necklace, and the golden-bristled boar of the gods. Apart from making jewelry, weapons, and armor for the gods, the dwarfs have their own magical attributes. Aubéron has a bow whose arrows always hit the target, an impenetrable chain-mail coat, a horn, and magic cup.

Dwarfs are remembered in ancient Scandinavian place-names, and folktales from all over Europe embed the memory of dwarfs in the fabric of storytelling. Emerging from dense forests, mysterious lakes, burial mounds, and hollow mountains, sometimes they aid humans, but often they are unreliable assistants, for they have their own agendas. They exist within a world of fluid boundaries where transformation plays a major role.

Denizens of an otherworld that interpenetrates the human world, dwarfs and elves were demonized by churchmen and conflated with Biblical evil powers. The realm of elves and dwarfs was much wider and far more diverse than that. Claude Lecouteux defines the real difference between sprites, elves, dwarfs, duses, trolls, and various forms of giants that existed in human perception before their demonization. *The Hidden History of Elves and Dwarfs* is essential reading for everyone who has ever wondered exactly what dwarfs are and where they come from."

NIGEL PENNICK, AUTHOR OF *THE PAGAN BOOK OF DAYS*

CONTENTS

Cover Image

Title Page

Epigraph

Foreword by Régis Boyer

Introduction. The Twists and Turns of Tradition

PART ONE. THE LITERARY TRADITIONS

Chapter 1. The Medieval Belief in Pygmies and Dwarfs

Chapter 2. The Dwarf in Western Literature - Romance, Celtic, Germanic

THE DWARF IN ROMANCE LITERATURE
THE CELTIC LITERATURE
THE GERMANIC LITERATURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Chapter 3. The Legend of Aubéron - From the French Huon de Bordeaux

AUBÉRON AND HUON
THE MAGICAL OBJECTS
THE HORN

Chapter 4. The Legends of Alberîch - From Norse Sagas and Germanic Tales

ALBERÎCH AND SIEGFRIED
ALBERÎCH AND ORTNIT
ÁLFRIKR

ALBERIC

Chapter 5. The Relatives of Aubéron - From the French Bataille Loquifer

PICOLET, GRINGALET, AND MALABRON
THE MALABRON OF THE ROMANCE OF *GAUFREY*
ZEPHYR

A Provisional Conclusion

PART TWO. MYTHOLOGIES AND BELIEFS

Chapter 6. The Dwarfs - Their Origin, Size, Names, Skills, and the Beliefs Surrounding Them

WHAT IS A DWARF?
THE SIZE OF DWARFS
THE BIRTH OF THE DWARFS
THE NAMES OF THE DWARFS
DWARFS, STONES, AND THE DEAD
DWARFS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP
THE DWARFS AND THE GODS

Chapter 7. The Elves - The Philosophy, Cultural Prospects, and Legends Surrounding Them

A BIT OF PHILOLOGY
THE ELVES OF LIGHT
CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE
ELVES AND THE DEAD
THE BLACK ELVES AND THE DARK ELVES
VÖLUNDR, PRINCE OF THE ELVES
THOR AND THE ELVES
THE SWAN MAIDENS AND THE ELVES
IN THE LAND OF THE ELVES
AUBÉRON-ALBERÎCH

PART THREE. THE EVOLUTION OF BELIEFS AND SURVIVALS

Chapter 8. The Demonization of Elves and Dwarfs

THE LESSONS OF THE LEXICON
ELVES, DWARFS, ILLNESSES
DWARFS AND THREADS
DECEPTIVE AND WICKED ELVES
THE ELF AND THE NIGHTMARE

Chapter 9. The Survivors of Pagan Legends - Duses, Sprites, Kobolds, and Howlers

THE DUSE
THE SPRITE
THE KOBOLD
THE *GENIUS CATABULI*
THE HOWLER (*SCHRAT*)
ELFLAND

Epilogue: Once Upon a Time … - They Existed Because We Believed

Afterword to the Second Edition

ASSESSMENT OF THE RESEARCH
ADDITIONAL NOTES

Afterword to the Fourth Edition

Footnotes

Endnotes

Bibliography

Glossary

About the Author

About Inner Traditions • Bear & Company
Books of Related Interest
Copyright & Permissions
Index

FOREWORD
BY RÉGIS BOYER

What is so interesting in the books by Claude Lecouteux (I am thinking, for example, of his *Fantômes et Revenants au Moyen Âge*,[*1] also published by this house) is not only his vast erudition, his critical method, and the scrupulous respect he accords to the texts themselves before making any interpretation of them—it is his gift for comparing cultures, for suddenly making an unexpected leap, but one perfectly pertinent to the train of thought, from continental Germanic culture, of which he is a great expert, to Celtic, Medieval Latin, or ancient Scandinavian cultures, among others. This not only creates, in one fell swoop, "decompartmentalizations"—those unexpected but revealing enlargements that should ideally be the result of all genuine multidisciplinary approaches—but it also and most importantly makes us feel suddenly at ease. After all, without any need to exceed ourselves, like the author, with formidable erudition, it is enough to scratch a bit into the compost of age-old ideas, just below the surface of things, as he does, and all of us will find, in our personal or collective unconscious, several of these marvelous creatures that he has spent years tracking down, cataloging, classifying, analyzing, and explaining. In this book he will be speaking to us about dwarfs. And speaking extremely well, I might add. He draws forth a host of them from our childhood memories, because our young hearts cherished them by the hundreds, and they suddenly come back to us, in stories that more or less have "folk tales" underlying them, and which contain imagery that is—alas!—too often puerile in its reinforcement, offering a thousand sure depictions, or at least we think they are. Dwarfs are the ones we know best, as comic strips and cartoons will attest. Our certainties about elves are less secure. But dwarfs …

Yes, this is definitely it: Claude Lecouteux's major merit is his gift for demonstrating to us, in an unrivaled way, that our ideas with respect to what is called "lower mythology" are quite different from what shallow people might imagine. The question he raises constantly is the same one that Mauric Fombeure posed concerning the duck-billed platypus:

But do you know the duck-billed platypus?
Do you know it well enough?

And no, we do not know the dwarfs and elves (assuming they are not one

and the same!) well enough. What is more, they do not even remotely correspond to the idea we have constructed of them. If there were only one piece of praise we could give to the author, it would be this: he is a demystifier of the highest order. This is because he is a peerless investigator who has resolved, once and for all, to rebut all received ideas and conventional assumptions and go straight to the sources, the primary texts, and the discoveries he has made are simply exhilarating.

For example, here is something that few specialists know: not all dwarfs are small or good, at least originally—which is to say, before the onset of the slow work of devaluation and degradation that the Church and its clerics patiently undertook over the course of the centuries. But the Church also cannot be exclusively blamed for this process. By their nature, the extremely archaic creations of our religious imagination tend to gradually erode and fall to a lower level, from where they eventually reappear in a certain kind of fauna with countless names. It is a situation that always ends up driving mythologists, folklorists, and other scholars of popular traditions to despair.

But no one should say: too bad for the poet or dreamer who, in every way and by the grace of God, will never abdicate their rights. Because, when we read studies like this one, we find that the foundations of our, shall we say, romantic reveries are quite deep, rich, and sure in another way, which is capable of revitalizing a much more fruitful train of thought! Not only are Snow White’s seven dwarfs, as we have become accustomed to see them today, merely a pitiful, sugarcoated version of a far more grave reality, but our regrets over all the connotations and overtones that we have caused them to lose are fully justified. And the dancing elves of Leconte de Lisle are so removed from their archetypes that it would honestly be better to see them petrified in cold Parnassian marble.

There are several presuppositions, or starting principles, adopted here that deserve our attention. First, it is important to make a clear-cut distinction between literature on the one hand, and beliefs (or mythology, for it is often the case that beliefs are merely the dregs of myth) on the other. Second, we need to recognize that these beliefs have always evolved and even continue to evolve—despite the snickering of the rationalists, materialists, positivists, structuralists, and so forth—in a double world, but ultimately these two worlds are not alien to one other. There are footbridges that are quite real and offer inductive supports, even though memory of them can be cause for offense. The essential task of the vast majority of what we call “literature” is

specifically to recuperate the immortal mythical or legendary themes that managed to survive in oral tradition before they found favor in the pen of the first person to write them down, who was himself followed by a countless series of imitators. To sum up: the present book deserves our attention because the teachings to be drawn from a study like this are legion, and because there are few studies that are as equally enthusiastic and fruitful as this work of "archaeology" applied to the mentalities of ancient cultures.

You will see, after finishing the book, how the image of this Alberîch, Alfrekr, Aubéron, Oberon will emerge in greater scale, although this is a figure on whom we have been in the habit of dispensing a wealth of peremptory assertions. So many of his features make him a "dwarf," yet his name implies he is probably an elf. A magnificent synthesis could be created from him, and this is what Claude Lecouteux has attempted and has succeeded at doing. Faithful as he is to his sources and to this principle, which I described earlier, of engaging with the primary texts that have survived from different cultures, he is going to show you to just what extent this figure resembles, in its "little" person, all sorts of creatures that come to us from the lower mythology. But he stresses several invariants that take us to the very heart of the subject and even permit us to go beyond the aims implied by the book's title.

He emphasizes, for example, the close collusion of the dwarfs and the Third Function of Georges Dumézil. This function is associated with vegetative processes and the production of goods, but seen here from the perspective of the liquid (or aquatic, if you prefer) element, which would appear to be congenitally tied to dwarfs. This brings us a great distance. The old sacred Scandinavian texts mention several times the formidable battle waged between the two "families" of the Gods, the Vanir and the *Æsir*, which was not ended by the victory of one party over the other but by a modus vivendi accompanied by an exchange of hostages. The Vanir incontestably belong to the Third Function and represent, we may safely say, an extremely archaic stage of Norse-Germanic religion. The *Æsir*, without being in any case exclusively martial entities, tend more toward judicial-magical sovereignty (First Function) and war (Second Function). Despite their name, which conveys echoes of Sanskrit (cf. *asu-*, with the idea of "life force"), it is possible that they are not as old as the Vanir. We have a glimmering of what comes next: the "gods," such as we conceive them, who become the devils after Christianity, would be the *Æsir* (Odin, Thor Tyr, Baldur, and so on—

albeit with one caveat: Thor is definitely not, as many mistakenly believe, restricted to the warrior function, and Lecouteux clearly demonstrates otherwise), while the Vanir, who are older and more "eroded" by time, would be the prototype of what will later become dwarfs and elves. How else can we explain the fact that the main god of the Vanir, Freyr, was said to own a dwelling called "World of the Elves" (Álfheimr) and that so many place-names, especially in Sweden, are dedicated to either him or his consort Freya.

Then again, if there is an exasperating creature for the contemporary researcher in Scandinavian mythology, it would clearly be Loki, the god of "evil," in other words, disorder. But is he part of the *Æ*sir? Or is he part of the Vanir? Here are several striking details: one of the possible meanings of his name is "spider," which Claude Lecouteux will discuss several times in this book. I was especially struck by the fact that in a variety of places he was described as Odin's "sworn brother"—as if he was not a member of the same "species." Could he represent an already degraded stage of some kind of much older creature? And there is also the question of how he relates to a famous giant that bears his same name. The two greatest Scandinavian mythographers of the Middle Ages, the Icelander Snorri Sturluson and the Dane Saxo Grammaticus, knew the myths that had been crafted about him. Might Loki not be the most representative of these ancient divine populations and the sole one that guaranteed the transition to a world of clearly anthropomorphized and individualized gods: the fact remains that his name also means "end"? Let us say, then, that Loki would be the leader of the dwarfs to the extent, as I said earlier, to which these figures represent an ongoing process of deterioration.

But deterioration of what, more precisely? If there is one point that emerges quite clearly from the study you are about to read, there should be no stark distinction made between what we call giants and dwarfs. I have always been fully convinced of this because I believe that the first stage of the religious mentality of the ancient Germans—who are not totally original in this, I concede—was based on a worship of the dead, the ancestors, and in particular the great ancestors who were the founders of lineages and clans. And even if one wishes to see the giants as the personifications of the major natural elements, that would not truly change anything in a world where, on the one hand, hardly any demarcation existed between the living and the dead, and, on the other hand, what lay beyond our vision was definitely made up of the dead. There is nothing impossible or absurd in showing that this cult

of the dead, combined with the worship of the great natural forces, could very well have engendered, little by little, through intellectualization, the organized mythological world that is presented to us by the great texts of the literary era. Undifferentiated shades of the dead were easily incarnated, if I dare say so, into the very fabric of our world, followed by gods… .

In other words: dwarfs are the dead. This is why they are the same size as we are (a trait clearly preserved by the Norwegian trolls) and could very likely have been gigantic, through respect and veneration, in some way; and why they are "twisted" in every sense of the word, including the popular usage—this is the meaning of the Old Norse *dvergr*—as are the cadavers in the grave. This is also why, like all the dead, everywhere, they are so closely associated with the Third Function inasmuch as man—and here we may take a biblical image literally—has come from the soil (*homo-humus*), which is made from the flesh of dwarfs (or giants). And there is the entirely banal notion that death is also the discovery of the great secret, the disclosure of the mysteries that were the source of so much enervation during our lives. So there is nothing surprising to be found in the skill of the dwarfs, as is stated so well in one of the *Poetic Edda*'s most elegant texts, the "Alvissmál."

But what about the elves? I ask myself whether Claude Lecouteux might not have put greater emphasis on this question. There are two faces in the phenomenon of death: a physical aspect to which I have just alluded and a mental aspect, the translation of the good old mind-matter dichotomy that has been such an obsession for the Western world for millennia. The dead person in matter and the dead person in spirit is a distinction we recognize perfectly again in the revenant-ghost pair that Claude Lecouteux also knows so well. The dead person that is corporeal is malevolent and dangerous, while the dead person that is spirit in essence is friendlier. And it is certain that the elves (or I should write *álfar*) are more of the air, more elegant, more intelligent, and potentially better than the dwarfs. It is quite conceivable that since the time man came into existence there have been multiple ideas of death. Giants, dwarfs, and elves would all represent so many possible depictions.

Just from these few hastily jotted-down notes, one can gauge the wealth of a subject like this, the perspectives it opens, and how, when treated in such a manner, they offer the radical renewal that this type of presentation merits. And you shall see, as I predicted earlier, what new reveries and what a renewed perspective it presents regarding traditions that we previously

thought of as unshakable!

After all, it is also a pious work this author is granting us: through Aubéron, the elf and their fellows, he is offering us death tamed.

R. B.

LA VARENNE, MARCH 3, 1988

RÉGIS BOYER (1932–2017) was a professor of Scandinavian languages, literatures, and civilization at the University of Paris–Sorbonne. During his lifetime he published a large number of studies and books, which also included translations of Icelandic sagas and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, and was recognized as a scholar who contributed greatly to the general public's better understanding of historical reality in the Viking Age. In 2013 he won the Roger Caillois Prize.

Abbreviations

BCE	Before Common Era (= B.C.)
CE	Common Era (= A.D.)
Ger.	German
MHG	Middle High German
OE	Old English
ON	Old Norse
pl.	plural
str.	strophe(s)

THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF TRADITION

Where is the time when people placed the broken object in front of their door at dusk in the hopes that the dwarfs would repair it before dawn? What have become of the offerings, the food or clothing that people once placed beneath the tree in the yard, in the barn, or in the stable? It was another time, a time when the dwarfs—who forged splendid armor and swords that could not be blunted, as well as jewelry inlaid with sparkling gems and possessed of marvelous properties—still frequented the company of humans. In this distant past, the dwarfs set the knight who had gone astray back on the right road or, conversely, mocked and humiliated him. They would come seek the aid of the valiant in ridding themselves of a giant or dragon who was making their lives unbearable. In this far-off time, Berthe spun, Charlemagne dreaded the prospect of meeting fairies, the Queen Pedauque hid her goose foot in the folds of her robe, and Saint Brendan set off in search of the earthly paradise. This was the Middle Ages. The fields, forests, shores, waters, and mountains all teemed with hidden life; nature was inhabited by thousands of creatures, quite frequently nocturnal visitors, among whom we find the dwarfs.

Goblins or brownies, elves or sprites: who today knows what they were in the world of the ancient past, before they became the small personages of fairy tales and legends? A long time ago, each of them enjoyed their own life and performed an activity that was reflected in their name, but centuries have passed and the erosion of time has done its work. It has done its work so well, in fact, that dwarfs remain quite mysterious to us. They are a vestige of our antiquity, that of the medieval West; they are part of the flotsam that is swept along by the tide of history and which twentieth-century researchers encounter as they pore over the ancient texts.

Historical evolution and, more significantly, Christianization represented an assault from which the dwarfs would never recover. Confused with incubi,

demons, and devils, the different races conveniently defined by the word "dwarf" now formed but a single family. Seeing in it the trace of a detested paganism, the Church struck it with anathema, adulterated the bulk of the beliefs that it brought back, and so thoroughly entangled the threads of the various traditions that an almost inextricable snarl was created that causes researchers to recoil.

Whoever tries to discover what the dwarfs were will be left hungry for more, and his bewilderment will not be soothed in the slightest. Except for several well-done articles, there is no recent, reliable work that has been written on the topic of dwarfs. Several earlier monographs do exist, but these are already dated and quite problematic because they either rely exclusively on the ancient literature of courtly romance, or on relatively recent collections of folk tales, such as that of the Brothers Grimm. However, dwarfs are not completely unknown entities, and everyone is capable of picturing them in their imaginations: little bearded men wearing red caps, who are mischievous and playful, helpful and sly, nimble and industrious. This is the way we see them appear as gardens ornaments, especially in Belgium, Germany, and the United States, and less commonly in France—but who ever asks himself what they are doing in these places?

Of all the dwarfs of the Middle Ages, Aubéron or Oberon, alias Alberîch, is certainly the most famous. He belongs to a long literary tradition and made his appearance in France during the twelfth century, in *Huon de Bordeaux,* a text that met with enormous popularity but whose author remains unknown to us.[1] This romance was later reworked and supplied with an introduction that recounted Aubéron's childhood, translated into Flemish, and later translated into English by Sir John Bourchier. In England, Chaucer speaks of Aubéron in his *Canterbury Tales*, Robert Greene brings him to the stage in his *Scottish History of James IV,* and Edmund Spenser gives him a magnificent genealogy in his *Faerie Queene.* Shakespeare brought about his literary canonization by introducing Oberon into *A Midsummer's Night Dream.* On the continent, Count Tressan (1705–1783) rediscovered the figure who had been nicknamed the "little king of Faerie" and adapted the medieval romance for the "Bibliothèque universelle des romans" literary series.[2] In Germany, the great poet C. M. Wieland was inspired by this adaptation to write his *Oberon* (1780), about which Goethe levied the following judgment: "One will love Wieland's *Oberon* as long as poetry is poetry, gold is gold, and crystal is crystal." The composer Carl Maria von Weber turned *Oberon* into

an opera that premiered at Covent Gardens on April 12, 1826, and was first performed in Paris on May 25, 1830. In 1912, Émile Roudié adapted the subject again for a play, and later, in 1922, Alex Armoux wrote a melodrama of which Oberon is the hero. These are the major stages of the literary and musical life of this appealing figure. Whence did such popularity arise?

Aubéron is a fascinating and mysterious figure who is positioned directly at the intersection of the traditions of yesteryear. “We get the sense that what we are dealing with,” writes Daniel Poirion, “is a legendary and probably folkloric type, but it is difficult to situate him between the Celtic and Germanic traditions.”[3] Aubéron’s recuperation during the thirteenth century by a cleric of Saint-Omer was composed as part of the great renaissance of the marvelous that was ignited a century earlier. It is typical for authors and poets to turn to oral traditions and popular beliefs, as well as to the scholarly literature (geographies, travel narratives, and so forth) in order to enrich their repertoire, to increase their store of themes and motifs, and this is how Oberon entered literature and found immortality there.

Small in size but with extensive powers, hunchbacked but handsome, a happy combination of strength and grace, justice and intelligence, grandeur and charity, and the guardian spirit of the young Huon, Aubéron is an unusual character—one whose true nature and original and archaic features still pierce through the courtly veneer of medieval narratives. It is for this reason that I have chosen to place him at the center of this study, and also because he is one of those rare and marvelous individuals who make it possible to erect a bridge between the different literatures and beliefs of the ancient past.

Is the Aubéron of courtly romance the same as the Germanic Alberîch? Researchers are divided on this point. Some say yes, and others say no, but each side provides interesting arguments that nevertheless always rest on a partial vision of things. In fact, once one begins to study the beings that are associated with so-called lower mythology, specialization becomes a handicap. A person should not be content with rummaging through the past of just one civilization or one single country—which is an error that occurs far too often—because to do so is to overlook the epithet of the medieval man: *homo viator*.[*2] To do so is to ignore the intense exchanges that constantly took place in the various networks of monasteries that covered Europe and contributed in large part to ensuring the cultural unity of the West. To do so is to overlook the circulation of people, manuscripts, and news: the synods and the councils, the pilgrimages and fairs, and finally the

festivals that were the occasion for all sorts of exchanges. The merchants, the jongleurs, and the clergymen all spread information. Writings and beliefs were not therefore confined within fixed, immutable frontiers, especially if they are old. They traveled from one country to the next because they were cited in a penitential or were anathematized by a council. We must also take into consideration the stratification of different cultures resulting from historical fluctuations: large-scale invasions, Viking raids, the establishment of trading posts, the colonization of fallow lands, and so forth. France and England are splendid examples of this kind of mixing.

We must therefore embrace as large a horizon as possible, with all the attendant risks,[†3] without overlooking the distinctive features of each civilization. The results will then be rewarding of the effort: recall just what Georges Dumézil was able to draw forth from the mists of oblivion by going beyond the borders of the West! We must make use of any material that comes to hand, shedding light on literature through what we know of the society, and vice versa, without excluding any form of writing.

Careful examination of the texts in which dwarfs play an important role show that the Celtic and Germanic worlds are close to one another. We need only compare, for example, the tales of the Brothers Grimm to those collected by T. Crofton Croker (1825), Patrick Kennedy (1866–1871) for Ireland and Wales, and by J. F. Campbell (1860–1862) for Scotland.[4] France has its own place, and while it shares common features with these two civilizations in matters concerning dwarfs and even many other things, we should make clear from the outset that the dwarf is not a figure of the Roman world. Might it not be somehow significant that this figure is completely absent from Roman literature? On the other hand, he is right at home in the entire Germanic area, which adopted him, at a time well before the Middle Ages, from the Celtic domain, where he has left few traces. And yet! And yet the so-called Arthurian literature—the romances of the Round Table—reveals a veritable treasury of Celtic motifs with myths and gods that are still recognizable despite their disguise. This literature does not ignore the dwarfs, even if they only play minor roles, appearing furtively in the course of an adventure, and most often remain anonymous. If we wish to make a strong case for the presence of Celtic and Germanic genes in the dwarfs of the Middle Ages, if we want to understand what falls under the jurisdiction of literature, myth, and beliefs, we must gather together all the pieces of a dossier that conforms to the realities of a bygone age, taking into account the admixture of cultures,

and, if possible, collect the oldest elements that were melted in the literary crucible.

To dispel the mystery surrounding the dwarfs of an earlier time, to discover the role they played and understand their nature, powers, attributes, and function, we must head deep into a dense forest that is, in turn, Brocéliande and Sylve Charbonnière. Here we must follow trails that have been partially erased, follow the twists and turns of tradition, and excavate the traces of the past that are buried beneath the dust of centuries. Once this has been done, new paths will be opened up for study and, considering the number of links we need that have vanished for all time, often insoluble problems will be raised. The fragments that remain nonetheless allow us to answer some essential questions: What is a dwarf? Where does it come from? What does it embody?

Through dwarfs, we can catch a glimpse of the coherence of folk traditions and their connection to mythology and religion. Fictional works only present us with a truncated image in this regard, of course, but it is not one that sprang up ex nihilo. We cannot imagine something we do not already know. Medieval writers divided information up in accordance with their intentions, retaining only those portions that served their purposes. Since we most often lack an understanding of the relationship between the fragment and the whole, many people have been tempted to view these scattered motifs as mere literary clichés, embellishments that can be explained away as a product of the taste for the marvelous that characterized the Middle Ages. Here we are going to discover an entirely different aspect of things—one that is all the more enthralling because it touches on the beliefs of our ancestors, and because it leads us onto the paths of myth, allowing us to glimpse a non-Christian culture that existed parallel to the clerical culture.[5] It is a culture whose last traces withstood all attempts at acculturation until the dawn of the industrial age.[6]

PART ONE

THE LITERARY TRADITIONS

1

THE MEDIEVAL BELIEF IN PYGMIES AND DWARFS

Before entering specifically into the literary realm, it is important to be aware of a fable that played a considerable role and saved more than one dwarf from oblivion, so to speak, by allowing indigenous traditions to take refuge behind the authority of ancient texts. The fable is that of the Pygmies.

There were and still are important differences in size between the races. For proof of this, you need only stand a Dutchman next to a Lusitanian.[*4] So depending on the viewpoint of this individual or that individual, we see the appearance of giants or dwarfs in stories. This is because everything is judged in accordance with a norm—the norm of the narrator. However, everything is relative, and as early as 1245 we find this observation by Gossouin de Metz:

> The giants that live in some places display great amazement on seeing how small we are compared to them. We do the same to those who are only half our size.[1]

Travelers during the time of classical antiquity were astounded by their encounters with dwarf peoples, African Pygmies, and the Negritos of the Andaman Islands, the Malaysian Archipelago, and the Himalayan foothills. They reported their experiences with some embellishments, and legend did the rest.

It is impossible to deal with the dwarfs of the Middle Ages without touching on this reality, because the Pygmies supplied the intelligentsia of this era with descriptive motifs and the Latin name for dwarfs, *pygmaeus*, which was widely used in the scholarly literature to the detriment of the more obscure terms *pumilio* and *nanus* (both meaning “dwarf”). The fable of the Pygmies at the far corners of the world established the credibility that could be granted to the dwarfs of the Medieval West. If Pygmies were spoken of by authors like Pliny the Elder and Solinus, and even the Church Fathers, it is because they existed, and not only within the confines of the known world.

We should always keep in mind that the folk traditions that became attached to scholarly traditions have rarely disappeared without a trace. In the Middle Ages doubt was never cast on the reports of the Greeks and Romans, and even Saint Augustine discussed the serious matter of whether certain monstrous humans might have descended from “our father of all,” Adam.

Knowledge of the Pygmies has been around for a long time. Hesiod spoke of them in the eighth century BCE[2] and a century later Homer popularized the fable of their battle with the cranes.[3] This fable reappears in the writings of Aristotle, but it was not until Herodotus (fifth century BCE) that we see the first ethnographical report.[4] In the fourth century BCE, Ctesias of Cnidus, a physician in the court of the Persian king Artaxerxes II Mnemon, devoted a long description to the Pygmies in his *Indika.* Only fragments of this work survive, and the piece that concerns us here was collected by Photios I (ninth century), the Patriarch of Constantinople, in his *Bibliotheca,* in which we can read:

> In the very middle of India there are black men, called *Pygmaioi* (Pygmies), who speak the same language as the other inhabitants of the country. They are very short, the tallest being only two cubits in height, most of them only one and a half. Their hair is very long, going down to the knees and even lower, and their beards are larger than those of any other men. When their beards are full-grown they dispense with wearing clothes and let the hair of their head fall down behind, well below the knees, while their beard trails down to the feet in front. When their body is thus entirely covered with hair they fasten it round them with a girdle, so that it serves them for clothes. They have a very large and fat penis; it hangs down to their ankles. They are snub-nosed and rather ugly. Their animals, sheep and oxen, are also Pygmies. Their horses are no larger than the size of our rams. Three thousand of these Pygmies are in the retinue of the King of India. They are very skilled in the art of archery. They are also very just and observe the same laws as the Indians. They hunt the hare and the fox, not with dogs, but with ravens, kites, crows, and eagles.[5]

While this description resembles an ethnologist’s report, some elements already sound much like the stuff of legend—the size of the animals, for example.

Between 300 and 290 BCE, Megasthenes, Ptolemy II’s ambassador to the king of India’s court, also spoke of these astonishing people. Strabo (64

BCE–ca. 25 CE) preserves for us the following passage from his lost book:

> [Megasthenes] then deviates into fables, and says that there are men of five, and even three spans in height, some of whom are without nostrils, with only two breathing orifices above the mouth. Those of three spans in height wage war with the cranes (described by Homer) and with the partridges, which are as large as geese; these people collect and destroy the eggs of the cranes which lay their eggs there; and nowhere else are the eggs or the young cranes to be found; frequently a crane escapes from this country with a brazen point of a weapon in its body, wounded by these people.[6]

We can see how legend gradually superseded reality and transposed it into the sphere of the marvelous. Here, the Pygmies have no noses and have become like another monstrous people, the Arhines.

Pliny the Elder, whose *Natural History* represents the whole of human knowledge in the first century CE, mentions the Pygmies, and his account deserves careful reading as it, too, contains elements of legend:

> Beyond these people, and at the very extremity of the mountains, the Trispithami and the Pygmies are said to exist; two races which are but three spans in height, that is to say, twenty-seven inches only. They enjoy a salubrious atmosphere, and a perpetual spring, being sheltered by the mountains from the northern blasts; it is these people that Homer has mentioned as being waged war upon by cranes. It is said, that they are in the habit of going down every spring to the sea-shore, in a large body, seated on the backs of rams and goats, and armed with arrows, and there destroy the eggs and the young of those birds; that this expedition occupies them for the space of three months, and that otherwise it would be impossible for them to withstand the increasing multitudes of the cranes. Their cabins, it is said, are built of mud, mixed with feathers and egg-shells. Aristotle, indeed, says, that they dwell in caves.[7]

Incidentally, we may note that a pillar capital in the Cathedral of Saint Lazarus in Autun (Burgundy, France) shows a Pygmy on horseback over a crane that it is slaying.

Drawing inspiration from the works of Pliny or Solinus (a mediocre third-century grammarian), the writers of the Middle Ages retained only a part of the information. They situated the Pygmies in India (a designation that also referred to Ethiopia and Egypt, as well as to the Indian subcontinent proper)

and on the island of Bridinno to the north of Asia.[8] Here, it is actually the Lapps that are the target of observations. The learned writers of the Middle Ages refer to the Pygmies as "little men" (*homolulli*) or "dwarfs" (*pumiliones, nani*), and never forget to recount their combat against the cranes, or to allude to it. Later, the cranes were transformed into griffins.

In the twelfth century, the theologian Honorius of Autun expanded upon the history of these individuals: the wives of the Pygmies give birth every three years and have become old by the time they are eight.[9] This piece of information is taken from Pliny, where it concerns another people,[10] but it is easy to see how such a connection is made: because they are small in size, the Pygmies can only have short lives. By the thirteenth century, the Pygmies had become well established in medieval European legends, and some writers even claimed that they paid tribute to the giants of Canaan who had subjugated them.[11] Similarly to the Acephali, Cynocephali, Skiapodes, and other monstrous humanlike beings, the Pygmies were accorded a place in the geographies and encyclopedias, as well as on maps. Theologians showed an interest in them that was equal to that of the scholars. Saint Augustine wondered whether they might be the progeny of Adam,[12] and many centuries later Albertus Magnus (1206–1280) saw them as a possible link between man and ape. Citing a case of dwarfism affecting an eight-year-old girl of Cologne who was the size of a one-year-old child, he echoed an explanation that had earlier been put forth by Avicenna and traced the origin of this monstrosity to a flawed act of coitus, one in which only a small portion of the father's semen had entered the mother's womb.[13] We should note that Aristotle has already suggested a dual theory as an explanation for this condition: it resulted from a womb that was too small for the embryo, as well as the insufficient feeding of the newborn.[14]

The scholars and the theologians of the Middle Ages never succeeded in determining whether to classify the Pygmies as men or animals. Peter of Auvergne (died 1304), rector of the University of Paris and later the bishop of Clermont, clearly raised the question: "Are Pygmies men?" Despite a long examination of the matter, he did not answer it, however, and left it to others to resolve.[15] The first notable progress was achieved by Odoric of Pordenone (1289–1331), a missionary sent to China in 1314, who saw them as men possessing a "reasonable soul" like rest of us.[16]

We should not assume that only Pygmies made it into the texts. Thanks to

Rabanus Maurus (784–856), the *Praeceptor Germaniae* (“teacher of Germany”) who was the abbot of Fulda and later the archbishop of Mainz, we are informed that dwarfs were known in the West. Rabanus interpreted the noun “Pygmy” as designating:

> Those whom the common folk call “the seven-caulinians” because seven of them can sleep beneath a stalk (*caula*).[17]

Unfortunately, this is the only evidence I have been able to collect on the existence of autochthonous dwarfs. In any case, it shows that the term “Pygmies” can designate other individuals than the people of the East introduced by Pliny and other authors.

Since reality played an important role in the formation of legendary traditions, the question has been raised whether the dwarfs of the court could also have had some signficance in this regard. If we study the texts predating the sixteenth century, we must acknowledge that there is a lack of evidence that would allow for a categorical answer. The English chronicler John of Oxnead (Johannis de Oxenedes), whose work covers the years 449 to 1292, cites, in a list of the marvels that left their mark on the year 1249, a court dwarf that was measured at three feet. We also know that the Countess of Artois and Burgundy, Mahaut (Mathilda), had a dwarf of Sicilian origin, Calo Jean, for a servant. He married in 1304, but his wife died shortly after. He remained in the company of the countess until 1322, at which time he retired to the monastery where Mahaut’s father had been laid to rest. He died there in 1328. The dwarf Perrinet lived in the court of this same noble lady around 1310.[18] We can see that these examples are quite few in number when compared to later times. Catherine of Medici tried to create a race of dwarfs by marrying people of small stature together. There is also the painting by Anthonis Moor, now housed at the Louvre Museum, which depicts the dwarf of Charles Quint. In the Prado Museum there is the painting by Velasquez in which the dwarf of Philip IV appears.

While the extensive studies in this direction have proven to be disappointing, we can at least assume that there is no reason cases of biological dwarfism would have been less frequent during the Middle Ages than they are today. Since the standards of hygiene, food (most significantly), and gynecological supervision were certainly much lower than they are today, it is probable that there were many cases of dwarfism, just as there were also other monstrosities caused by bone deficiencies or disorders of the endocrine system. Among other things, I base my assumption on the

testimony of Hugo von Langenstein, the member of a noble family living on the shores of Lake Constance. Around 1290, he wrote:

> Everyday are born in the world of men those who, from the front and from the back, are crafted so poorly that it is hard to rank them among the number of a man's children. The blind are as numerous as the paralytics. Their father, mother, and brothers are ashamed of them; the sight of their child and their great grief are a heavy burden. More than one has two heads, hard as that may be to believe. More than one has two bodies, who could describe it? May God have mercy! There are some who are missing arms, others are born without hands and with various malformations.[19]

What a terrible portrait this is. The scant evidence for cases of dwarfism most likely arises from the fact that these children were not viable and must have perished in the weeks immediately following their births.

Here I have presented the earliest traditions that contributed to the medieval belief in dwarfs. It is difficult to evaluate their exact impact on literature and mentalities, but one thing is almost certain: when poets and writers included ugly and poorly built dwarfs in their tales, they were inspired by reality. We know, in fact, that there are two types of dwarfism: individuals of the first type are quite normal and good looking, just miniature; the second type are ugly, with limbs that are disproportionate in size. The first type are intelligent and are able to procreate and live for a long time; the second type, who are stricken with physical degenerations, are simpleminded, surly, and infertile and die young.

The fable of the Pygmies has provided several components to the literature that we can determine more or less. First, it fixed the size of dwarfs, which is almost always described as being around three spans. Next, it lent credence to the notion of dwarf animals that served as mounts for these miniature beings. These mounts would be adapted to our horizon and to our fauna—they are horses, chamois, and deer.

Up to this point, we have focused on the scholarly literature: the texts of theologians, encyclopedists, and geographers. Next we will see what the different Western literatures have to offer us.

THE DWARF IN WESTERN LITERATURE

Romance, Celtic, Germanic

The dwarfs that the poets and romance authors present in their narratives exhibit notable differences, depending on the country. If our aim is to get a clear and fairly precise idea of these small figures, we must make ourselves aware of their character and their most striking features. It is not my intention to provide a systematic census of all dwarfs,[1] which would soon try the reader's patience. It will suffice to compile here the results of the various studies and to underscore everything that seems to be of particular importance.

THE DWARF IN ROMANCE LITERATURE

In the romance literature, the dwarfs are never main characters in the stories.[2] Aubéron/Oberon is the sole exception. Typically, dwarfs appear here and there in supporting roles that vary in accordance with the literary genre. In the epic, the dwarf holds a place in the pagan armies and forms part of those mysterious and monstrous people who dwell at the borders of the civilized world, living most often in the East. Their best representative would be Agrapart the Bearded One, who emerges in *Aliscans*, a twelfth-century chanson de geste that recounts the legend of William of Orange. Agrapart is a king who commands a body of troops in the Saracen Army. He is as agile as an ape, humpbacked, sticky as glue, ugly, and hairy. His eyes are as red as glowing coals, and his nails are as sharp as the claws of a griffin. He only

measures three feet in height, and he dies shortly after entering the story: Rainouart dispatches him *ad patres* with a blow from his dear *tinel* (club).[3] Generally speaking, the dwarfs in the chansons de geste roughly correspond to a similar type as Agrapart, with their descriptions being more or less elaborate. Writers were often content to endow these dwarfs with a humpback and black skin—sure signs of their paganism and malignancy.

In the literature of the romances, we must give a particular attention to what is called "the Matter of Britain," meaning the chansons de geste concerning the Knights of the Round Table. These texts are the preferred terrain for dwarfs, and we encounter a large number of them here. Unfortunately, most of the time they are stereotypes, and neither their morphology nor clothing are the object of observations that would open windows onto a mythical horizon. Their average height is around three feet, which seems to recall the common scholarly traditions concerning the Pygmies. They are dressed as peasants or knights. This almost general lack of detail underscores the lack of interest people seemed to have in them. If we take the great *Prose Lancelot* (thirteenth century), for example, of the eighty dwarfs that appear there, only one is named: Groadain.[4] This text also offers us a veritable catalog of the roles and activities of the dwarfs in the romances. By slightly simplifying matters to avoid compiling a tedious list of works and authors, I can state the following:

- The dwarfs give information or advice to the heroes; they help them, welcome them, or—they give them shelter.
- They play the role of servants: companion, messenger, doorman, cook.
- They act as knights, with whom they would be easily confused if they were not so small.
- Their behavior is quite discourteous, and they play the role of traitors and of deceivers.

We must exclude from this list those that guide the cart of infamy, whom we shall discuss separately.

It was Chrétien de Troyes who introduced the character of the dwarf into the Arthurian romance between 1170 and 1181. His predecessors—Gildas,

Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace—never spoke of them. The great poet from Champagne described the following individuals as attending the wedding of Erec and Enide:

> Next came the lord of the dwarfs, Bilis, King of the Antipodes. This man I tell you of was himself a dwarf and the brother of Bliant. Bilis was the shortest of all the dwarfs, and Bliant, his brother, the tallest, for he was a half-foot or full palm taller than any other knight in his kingdom. To display his lordship and his wealth Bilis brought along in his retinue two kings, who were dwarfs and held their land from him, Gribalo and Glodoalan.[5]

These dwarfs play no role in the narrative regarding Erec—they are simply accessories whose presence enhances the prestige of the hero: his qualities are recognized by everyone, even beings from the domain of fantasy. However, implicit within this description, we can discern that dwarf society is modeled on that of humans: Bilis, when all is said and done, is a sovereign and behaves as such toward Gribalo and Glodoalan. What may be more interesting is Chrétien de Troyes's observation about the respective size of Bilis and his brother. To a certain extent, it reduces the marvelous aspect by suggesting that Bilis is a false dwarf because we can also find in the same family an individual that is taller than a human. Nonetheless, the presence of dwarf vassals prompts us to develop the analysis further as it raises the problem of the size of dwarfs—not only in the romances, but also in popular beliefs—and this is a point to which we must later return.

When a dwarf is called on to play an important role, he is then "drawn" to the side of the humans and the courtly world. Here is how Chrétien describes Guivret: "He was small in stature, but courageous and brave," he says, and he never treats him as a dwarf. [6] Quite to the contrary, he gives him the title of knight and appoints him as a lord ruling over the Irish. In other words, when a dwarf emerges from anonymity and becomes a separate figure in its own right, when it is no longer simply an expression of local color and has stepped beyond the simple framework of the chivalrous adventure, it is rationalized and loses a considerable portion of the qualities that make it a dwarf.

In some rare cases, dwarfs display inexplicable behaviors that clearly show that the literature was inspired by folk beliefs. Where did the dwarf grinding pepper in a mortar that Désiré met in a forest come from?[7] What is the origin of that strange motif that the Middle Dutch *Lancelot Compilation* has passed down to us in? A dwarf blows in Gawain's face and transforms

him into a dwarf, too.[8] These are the kind of details that will enable us to pierce the veil of mystery that surrounds these creatures. Nevertheless, such clues remain rare, and that is why it is so significant we have a figure like Oberon at our disposal.

What is most striking about the dwarf we find in the romances is its lack of substance, its lack of mythical features. Where are its magic powers? Where can we find the hypothetical link that would connect it to the mythic realm? Everything seems to indicate that the creature's dwarfism is the only fantastic characteristic worthy of interest. If we were to subtract this feature from the equation, the figure would be perfectly interchangeable with other characters who possess absolutely no qualities suggestive of the marvelous, such as the helpful vassal, the mild-mannered serf, and so on.

In Chrétien de Troyes's *The Knight of the Cart*, a dwarf appears in the episode of the cart that is described as miserable and ill-bred. He merits our close attention. Meleagant has just abducted Queen Guinivere, the wife of King Arthur. Lancelot sets off in pursuit, but he overexhausts his horse (to death), resumes the chase on foot, and meets a dwarf guiding a cart whom he asks if he has seen the queen go by. "If you want to climb into the cart I am driving," the dwarf replies, "you will learn by tomorrow what has happened to the queen."[9]

Chrétien expends the necessary effort to explain, in his own way, what this strange demand meant. The vehicle was a kind of pillory on wheels in which criminals were exposed to public condemnation. Up to this point, nothing needs repeating, the explanation stands and justifies Lancelot's hesitations. The dwarf is malevolent and is seeking to humiliate and dishonor the knight. But Chrétien adds these words in the form of a proverb:

> When you meet a cart, make the sign of the cross and pray to God such dishonor not befall you.

These words have only a remote relationship to the text and with the use of the cart of infamy. They only become explicable if we recognize the cart's identity as something other than a cart.

Making the sign of the cross and turning your mind toward God are apotropaic measures, an exorcism combined with an ancient superstition, that of a confluence well known in Roman divination: the day will be lucky or unlucky depending on the first person you meet that day. Chrétien suggests that making the sign of the cross will avert the misfortune, but in the context of his story it takes a turn for the worse, and the hero has to risk taking a

place on this cursed vehicle and losing his reputation and honor. This is the interpretation that our author from Champagne sought to impose, but it is a false one, as he was a master in the art of adulterating and rationalizing mythical elements and giving them new meanings. The presence of the dwarf as the driver immediately places the cart under the sign of the otherworld. In his study of this episode, Jean Frappier advances the following hypothesis: "Before it became the cart of infamy, it would first have been the cart of death on the mythic plane, especially in Brittany."[10] Frappier is making a clear allusion here to the cart of Ankou.[*5] The arguments he puts forth, starting from a comparison between Chrétien's romance and a passage from the *Vita sancti Gildae* (a life of St. Gildas written before 1136 by the Welsh priest Caradoc of Llancarfan), support his hypothesis, but my study will show that we can change this hypothetical observation into a certitude because dwarfs are closely connected to death.

THE CELTIC LITERATURE

If we limit ourselves strictly to the texts written during the Middle Ages, dwarfs are quite scarce in Celtic literature, which is not absolute proof that they did not appear in large numbers elsewhere (such as the oral tradition, for example). V. J. Harward was forced to resort to anthologies of more recent tales and legends to come to an—alas—erroneous conclusion in his study of the subject: his attempt to show that all the dwarfs of Arthurian literature would derive from a dwarf god named Beli is hardly persuasive.[11] However, his work did have the merit of offering a corpus for my own study, as did the motif-index compiled by Tom Peete Cross.[12]

In a story with the title *The Journeys of the Tuath Luchra and the Death of Fergus*, which dates from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, an anonymous author recounts the visit of Iubdan to the home of the legendary king Fergus mac Léti. Iubdan is the sovereign of a race of dwarfs called leprechauns (Old Irish *luchorpán*), which means "small bodies." He spent some time at Fergus's court; then, before leaving the king, as a pledge of his friendship, he offered him a pair of white bronze shoes that gave their wearer the ability to walk on water as if it were solid ground. The text informs us that Iubdan is black but that the color of his subjects' skin is white, that he appears to believe in God, has a clear voice, is extremely handsome, and

never lies. He possesses splendid equipment, his shield makes him invulnerable, and his spear allows him to withstand one hundred enemies. He is the owner of a bathtub that triples a person's life span, a cauldron that transforms stones into delicious dishes, and a drum that plays a melodic tune all by itself. He rides a horse that has green hooves and is his size.[13]

Everything in this description has a mythic resonance, starting with the color of the legs of his steed. Green is an irrefutable sign of his affiliation to the beyond, which can be envisioned as the empire of the dead as well as the kingdom of fairies. Iubdan lives on an island, and it so happens that islands are how the Land of the Blessed is most commonly viewed by the Celts. The Byzantine author Procopius noted this as far back as the sixth century.[14] The bronze shoes bring to mind the amulets of the same nature that can be found in the tombs and tumuli. They are connected with a belief that can also be found among the Germanic peoples: a good pair of shoes is required to get to the otherworld. For example, the ancient Scandinavians would attach the "Hel-shoes" to the feet of the dead. Hel was the goddess of the dead.[15] The magical cauldron anchored in the Third Function,[*6] seen here in its relationship with food, is the prerogative of the deities of the otherworld, and the bathtub, singular an object as it is, is connected to the myth of the fountain of youth.

According to other texts, which in this case come from the twelfth century, leprechauns live underwater, or have an immediate relationship with the aquatic element. One of Fergus's adventures tells how he captured three of these dwarfs that had abducted him and spared their lives in return for three rewards. One of these gifts was the ability to travel beneath waterfalls, lakes, and seas.[16] This link with the waters, which could give the wrong impression that leprechauns are mermen, also appears in a place-name like Loch Luchra, "Lake of the Dwarfs," which is mentioned in the *Colloquy of the Ancients,* written between 1142 and 1167.[17] In an eleventh-century tale called "The Meeting of Cuchulainn with Senbec," a dwarf is described sailing on the Boyne River in a basket. When captured, in return for his freedom he offers a wonderful shirt and cloak that provide protection against death by fire and drowning, and a shield and spear that protect against wounds and guarantee victory.[18] In the book that bears his name, the medieval Welsh poet Taliesin states, "I know what dwarfs live beneath the sea,"[19] and *The Black Book of Camarthen* (1170–1230) also mentions dwarfs that reside in an

underwater kingdom.[20]

We should keep in mind these elements that reveal the dwarfs as creatures with a connection to water, for they enable us to see this is a motif going back to the prehistory of these beings. In fact, by the twelfth century, the approximate time of the composition of the Welsh romance *Peredur*—which exhibits a great deal of kinship with *The Story of the Grail* by Chrétien de Troyes—the knowledge of this connection appears to have been lost, as shown by the following adventure:

> After vanquishing the Black Oppressor, Peredur made his way to the palace of the sons of the King of Suffering. It had been given this name because a creature that lived in the lake called *Afanc* slew his children once every day. Peredur witnessed the reanimation of their cadavers. The sister of the young men placed their bodies in a cauldron and anointed them with a balm.
>
> The hero then meets a lady, whom we can easily recognize as a fairy, and he learns that he must fight the *Afanc.* This creature lives in a cave at the entrance of which stands a stone pillar that allows him to see everyone that enters without being seen, and to slay his visitors with a poisonous dart. "If you should swear to me that you shall love no other woman than I," said the mysterious woman to Peredur, "I will give you a stone that will allow you to see when entering the cave, but it will not see you." The gallant knight accepted the bargain, and the lady disappeared after giving him the stone. He then made his way into the cave, slew the *Afanc*, and cut off its head.[21]

John Rhys and John A. MacCulloch pointed out quite some time ago that *afanc* is etymologically equivalent to the Irish *abacc*, meaning "dwarf," and related to the Welsh *afon*, meaning "river."[22] The word also means "beaver," and it is curious that we can find a dwarf named Bifurr, which means "beaver," in ancient Scandinavian literature. Therefore Peredur slays a being that in an earlier version of the tale is a dwarf, but the text shows that the meaning of the word *Afanc* is no longer known. However, if it was simply an aquatic monster, we have a hard time seeing why it was persecuting the sons of the King of Suffering.

Another type of dwarf from Celtic literature also falls under this category of being a vestige from the past that was no longer understood. The presence of this *gorr*, or *corr*, related to the Armorican *korrigan*, is barely noted during the Middle Ages. In *Culhwch and Olwen*, a Welsh tale dating from the first

quarter of the twelfth century but reflecting much older traditions, a certain Gwyddolwyn Gorr is mentioned who owns wondrous bottles: “If a drink is poured into it in the East, it will hold its heat until the West.”[23] Among the marvels of the Isle of Britain mentioned in the group of texts known as *The Welsh Triads*, we find reference to a certain Ruddlwn Gorr; in other words, Ruddlwn the Dwarf. This individual was a magician who allegedly left his secrets to his nephew Koll,[24] or to Eiddilic the Dwarf. The *gorr*/*corr* seems to be primarily a dwarf magician, perhaps a survival of the ancient Korranyeit or Corraniaid that we know as one of the three oppressive invaders that befell the Isle of Britain in mythic times. The Korranyeit had the power to overhear every conversation held on the island, even those that were whispered, a trait that made them especially difficult to eradicate; Lludd did away with them using a ruse, by poisoning them.[25]

The *Colloquy of the Ancients* presents us with a kind of dwarf that was restricted to the Middle Ages, but whose trace we can find in the Arthurian literature: the dwarf musician, Cnu Dheireoil, is four fists in size and is the best musician in Ireland. Finn encounters him on a burial mound—a detail of which we should take note—at the moment this artist had just left the Tuatha Dé Danann, a fairy race living in underground palaces, because other musicians were jealous of his talent.[26]

Beside all these elements, it may be helpful to cite a strange explanation for the origin of dwarfs. Around 1100, the anonymous writer of the *Lebor na hUidre* (Book of the Dun Cow) recalls, in accord with Genesis, how Noah was first led to curse his son Ham: “Here is how Ham became the first man to be struck by a curse since the Great Flood. It is from him that are born the dwarfs, the Fomorians, the men with the heads of goats, and the deformed creatures that dwell among men… . Ham is the first ancestor of the monsters. They are not descendants of Cain.”[27] This Christian and euhemeristic explanation is the work of a churchman who knows his Saint Augustine well and is completely aware of the movement of ideas that were the main topics of discussion for the intellectuals of his day. But his text transforms dwarfs into monsters and strips them of all connection to myths and folk beliefs.

If we assess the results of this swift foray into the ancient Celtic literature, we can conclude the following: dwarfs are handsome or ugly, hostile or helpful, sometimes thieves or kidnappers. They inhabit kingdoms that are located on islands, in lakes, or in the sea, or are even underground. They live in communities there that are headed by a king. They celebrate festivals, play

music, ride small horses, possess magical objects, and have supernatural powers. It appears they are excellent craftsmen.

It is important that we underscore the fact that this image of the dwarf owes much to the romances, and the ancient features it contains no longer hold any value. It is obvious that there are several races of dwarfs—as the terms *corr* and *afanc* attest—who are deeply entangled with the otherworld, which does not seem to be restricted only to the land of Faery, and on this point the Celtic dwarfs and the dwarfs of the romances are opposites. But through the channel of the Matter of Britain, a veritable bridge set down between the Celtic world and the Romance world, certain peculiarities of these dwarfs from green Ireland and Wales have crossed over into France and combined with other motifs—motifs which, in this case, stem from the Germanic world.

THE GERMANIC LITERATURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

It was around the years 1023–1050 that a dwarf was mentioned for the first time in the literature of the German-speaking regions, but nonliterary texts show that this figure was known long before this date. *Ruodlieb* is considered to be the first German romance of the Middle Ages that was written in Latin, but based on legends whose traces we can find in later works. It tells of an encounter between a knight and a dwarf, and this encounter warrants our attention as it includes all the principal characteristics of the German dwarf found in subsequent tales.

Ruodlieb sees a dwarf at the entrance to a cave and captures him. In return for sparing his life, his prisoner promises Ruodlieb that he will show him the place where the treasure of the kings Immunch and Hartnuch is hidden, and then he foretells his future. Ruodlieb will win the hand of the fair Heriburg, but it will only be at the cost of much spilled blood if he does not follow his counsel. The suspicious knight demands pledges, so his captive calls for his wife. She emerges from the cave and offers to be the knight’s hostage until he has made good on his promises. It is finally said that this figure “is quite beautiful despite her small size.”[28] Unfortunately, the eighteenth fragment of the *Ruodlieb* stops there.

We should keep in mind the essential information gleaned from this story: dwarfs live in caves, they know hidden secrets, and they have a gift for foretelling the future. Furthermore, they inspire distrust in those they meet,

which implies that not all of them are well intentioned. All of the later texts confirm what is reported in *Ruodlieb* and add some additional details.[29] The dwarfs dwell inside hollow mountains that are veritable underground palaces sparkling with gems. They have wives and children, suzerains and vassals, and live in a hierarchical society that is a perfect reflection of medieval society. There is a nobility with a king at its head. At the king's court we find artisans and servants—smiths, tailors, and even sappers. Only peasants are not mentioned, but they rarely appear in courtly literature. Dwarfs experience the same passions as men, especially the torments of love and the goad of ambition. They wage war among themselves to conquer other hollow mountains. They have hereditary enemies in the form of giants and dragons. Their amusements correspond thoroughly to those of the human world: they love music, singing, dancing, good meals washed down with wine or mead; they organize jousts and tourneys on the green meadows that extend before their underground palaces; and finally, they know how to speak courteously. The great majority of dwarfs are well meaning and helpful; it is only in the Arthurian romances—in agreement with romance literature in general on this point—that we find portrayals of treacherous or thieving dwarfs.

The combat of a knight against dwarfs. (*Heldenbuch,* Strassburg, circa 1483.)

In the Germanic regions, dwarfs can appear in one of three ways: they can take the appearance of bald, bearded old men, or resemble extremely beautiful children, or else look like knights. The first type is quite rare in the Middle Ages, although it is the predominant type in later folk tales. It is attested in only three texts.[30] The child dwarf is equally rare and only appears in the tale of King Ortnit.[31] These first two types are incontestably the oldest and the least contaminated, but they were supplanted by that of the dwarf knight—a reflection of the era in which the poets, whose works we are discussing, lived—and they almost vanished completely from the literature. Their resurgence several centuries later indicates, however, that they had remained alive in oral folk traditions.

The dwarf knight was therefore predominant, and the best example we have is the king Laurin. Inhabiting a hollow mountain of the Tyrol region and the owner of a marvelous rose garden, he is described as follows in the long poem devoted to him:

> Look! A dwarf had arrived on horseback, swiftly. He was called Laurin and was holding, as a prince should, a lance wrapped in gold from which fluttered a silken banner emblazoned with two greyhounds that almost looked alive, as if they were pursuing a swift prey. When the banner fluttered in the breeze, one would say they were alive. Laurin's horse was piebald, large as a deer, and wearing a saddlecloth that lit the forest as if it were the height of day from the glow of its precious stones. The horse's bit was made of red gold. The little Laurin was holding it with his left hand when he met the two princes—namely, Theodoric of Verona and his friend Witige. The saddle of his horse was made of ivory and its pommel was covered with brightly gleaming rubies. The stirrups were splendid and Laurin bore himself erect like a knight. His blood-red leg shields were so solid that no sword was good enough to pierce them. His armor was of wonderful quality: it had been tempered with dragon's blood. Its gold shone. No sword was sharp enough to cut it; it had been made with intelligence… . Laurin wore a sword at his side, one he had wielded in many battles. It was a span in width and could cut iron, steel, and stone; the hilt was made of gold and its pommel was a bright sparkling diamond. It was worth more than an estate! Laurin's tunic was silk that sparkled with all the precious stones it held along

> with many diverse things and sixty-two rings. He wore it into single combat and into battle. His helmet was made of red gold, inlaid with rubies and carbuncles: no matter how dark the night, the gems of his helmet gave off a light that made it like the middle of day. His helmet was topped by a golden crown that God himself would have wanted to own; at its top birds fluttered and sang as if they were alive. It had been crafted with skill and magic. Laurin carried a gold shield that had never been sundered and on which a leopard, ready to leap, could be seen.[32]

There can be no doubt that what we are reading here is a purely literary fantasy, strongly marked by descriptions that can be found in much of the literature from this period. It would be impossible to tell Laurin apart from a normal knight if the anonymous poet had not made a point of informing us he was a dwarf. The reader will note the majesty of his appearance, the rich nature of his equipment, and the allusions to skill, knowledge, and magic. Dwarfs are knowledgeable about everything that relates to gems and metallurgy.

In the romances, dwarfs are generally between twenty-seven and forty-four inches in height. Despite their small feet and short legs, they have the strength of twelve to twenty men, which some authors explain is due to their possession of magical objects. It should be pointed out, however, that the physical weakness of a dwarf is a relational motif: it was thought that a small body could not possess great strength.

Dwelling inside mountains or even underground, and sometimes behind a waterfall, the dwarf knew all the secrets of nature: the virtues of the waters, stones, metals, and herbs. Of all the monstrous men of Medieval German literature, it is the only one to wield magical powers. The dwarf knows how to make himself invisible by means of a magic cloak (*Tarnkappe*) or headgear (*Tarnhelm*), an object that plays an important role in the legend of Siegfried. The dwarf can also travel in an instant to wherever he wishes to go, like the fairies in the romances. He owns rings in which marvelous stones are set and belts that multiply their wearer’s strength or provide protection from poverty, hunger, and so forth. He owns certain gems that would be quite useful for students of living languages because when placed beneath the tongue, they make it possible to understand and speak foreign languages. They also prevent thirst and prevent dragons from attacking; in short, nothing is a priori impossible for them. The dwarf knows the future, which implies a

connection to the Otherworld, but a later, rational explanation redefines this knowledge as the result of the study of necromancy, which, during the Middle Ages, was synonymous with sorcery.

The Germanic dwarf never seeks out the company of humans—quite the contrary—but if need arises, he will appeal to a gallant knight for aid in his wars against his fellow dwarfs or against giants. In these cases, the knight will receive a rich reward. A faithful friend who is generous with his wealth, the dwarf of the German regions seems to feel a certain fondness for mortals: Laurin abducts the beautiful Künhild and Goldemar the king of Portugal's daughter.[33] However, these events rarely take a turn for the worse because the dwarf of Germanic literature is basically courteous. When he is not, it is because he comes from the romance literature.

Two contradictory aspects emerge from this swift survey of the character and nature of the Germanic dwarf: his social and his private life, his mores and occupations, are those of human beings; his knowledge, his skill, his possession of magical objects, his mysterious powers, his habitat, and the role he plays in certain legends all confer on him the traits of a mythological figure and distinguish him, in this regard, from other human monsters.

If we compare the elements of the dossiers I have just presented regarding the dwarfs of the three major medieval literatures, we can immediately see that there are notable differences as well as commonalities. Everything suggests that the dwarfs featured in the epics and romances preexisted the written literature and have their source in living traditions, from which the poets have borrowed them. But at the same time as these creatures entered into the realm of literature, they also underwent a profound transformation: they were treated in accordance with the manners of the times, adapted to contemporary tastes, rationalized, and, so to speak, depersonalized. Dwarfs only retained a few mythic traits. They left the domain of actual beliefs to become literary clichés, ornamental elements intended to satisfy the taste of the audience that, in the period around 1130–1150, was increasingly partial to the marvelous.[34] This treatment was not completely negative. It permitted more than one motif to survive and become known to us, but these motifs cannot take on their full significance until we are able to cross-reference them and discover their true nature beneath the literary embellishment.

THE LEGEND OF AUBÉRON

From the French *Huon de Bordeaux*

It is in *Huon de Bordeaux*, a romance written between 1220 and 1260 that Aubéron makes his first appearance.[1] He is therefore a latecomer to the romance literature, which has had one important consequence: his personage was exposed to many influences and, to a certain extent, became adulterated. Aubéron is a literary creation constructed from pieces borrowed from almost everywhere with fairly happy results. The second romance in which he appears is the *Roman d'Aubéron,* written between 1260 and 1311 to serve as a prologue to *Huon de Bordeaux.* This story provides the genealogy of the small prince of Faery and recounts the history of his ancestors.[2] Needless to say, this prologue does not provide us with any pertinent information about Aubéron. It amplifies certain elements while erasing others and muddies the trails a little more. We shall therefore essentially be starting from *Huon de Bordeaux* for our analysis.

AUBÉRON AND HUON

During the festival of Pentecost, Charlemagne gathers his court together in Paris. Feeling the burden of age, he asks his barons to choose a successor and proposes his son Charlot, who is accepted. Then, at the urging of Amauri, the traitor of the story, he sends messengers to fetch Gérard and Huon de Bordeaux, who set off for Paris. Meanwhile, Amauri has drawn Charlot into his schemes by describing the two men from Bordeaux as potential rivals and suggesting he kill them. An ambush is set up in a forest close to the city. Despite Gérard's prophetic dream, Huon continues on his route, and the two brothers fall into the trap. Charlot wounds Gérard with a treacherous attack, but Huon kills him in honest combat. When he arrives at the palace, Huon accuses Charlemagne of having lured him into the ambush and presents the facts. Ill-advised by Amauri, the emperor decides to settle it with a trial by combat (*ordalie*) between Huon and Amauri. The traitor is beheaded without

confessing his crime. Charlemagne wishes then to banish Huon, but on the demands of his barons, he imposes on the Bordeaux knight the following ordeals: Huon has to supply him with hostages, travel to Babylon, present himself to the emir Gaudisse at the time he was dining, slit the throat of the first counselor he sees, and kiss Esclarmonde, the pagan king's daughter, three times. He also has to demand hostages from Gaudisse, as well as rich presents, his mustaches, and four of his molars. If he is able to emerge from these trials with his life, he can return to France, but he is forbidden to go to his fief before appearing in front of Charlemagne. Huon accepts these conditions, travels to Italy, receives absolution from his cousin the pope, and sets sail for the Holy Land from Brindisi.

Thus ends the epic, historical part of this narrative, which then becomes a tale of travel and adventure like several other texts from this era.

After sailing for two weeks, the Holy Land comes into sight. Huon disembarks there with his companions, visits Jerusalem, and then sets off toward the Red Sea. The small band then cross through fabled lands such as Femenia, where the sun never shines, the women are sterile, dogs don't bark, and roosters do not crow. (This land may be identical to the one bearing the same name that appears in *The Letter of Prester John*, a fantastic enumeration of the wonders of the East addressed to the emperor, Manuel Komnenos, by a mythical Asian king.[3]) Next they travel through the land of the Comains, whose inhabitants are hairier than wild boars and hide in their ears. They live out in the open air and eat raw flesh. Here the poet blends fact with fable: the Comains were a people that lived in the region between the Volga River and the Carpathian Mountains and were exterminated by the Mongols in 1238–1239. The "Ear-Men," Pliny the Elder's Panoteens, come from the stories told by Greek travelers returning from the East, long before our era. Ctesias of Cnidus and Megasthenes, for example, speak of creatures that include two major types: the Otolicnians, who have ears as large as baskets, and the Enotocoitians, who have ears they use to sleep in.[4] (Incidentally, we should note that these individuals sleep on top of one ear and cover themselves with the other when they are tired! Could this be the origin of the French expression "to sleep on his two ears"?[*7]) The author of *Huon de Bordeaux* takes these ethnic curiosities from the *Romance of Alexander*; there, the creatures were called Otifal.

Huon and his companions next found themselves in the Land of Faith, a country of innocence and abundance, a veritable earthly paradise. The

harvests there belong to the community and bread is cooked inside of cloths that, because of the inhabitants' moral perfection, never burst into flames. It is easy to recognize asbestos here, but during the Middle Ages such fireproof cloths were believed to be the hides of salamanders. The bestiaries tell us: "When it molts, the salamander collects his coat together in a clump that it then shapes with its burning breath; this creates a cloth that it abandons after cleansing it in flames."[5] If we can believe the ancient authors, this cloth was highly sought after. It was used to make coats, tunics, and canopies; in short, popular gifts. The motif of the Land of Faith, in which no man dies and where the greatest loyalty reigns, is also borrowed from *The Letter of Prester John*, which says: "There are no poor in our land, nor theft, nor heinous crime, nor avarice; our subjects have an abundance of everything. No one lies nor can anyone lie; if that happens the liar perishes immediately."[6]

After this paradisiacal land (one for which we will search in vain on any medieval map), Huon and his companions enter an arid region where, after fifteen days, their provisions are running out and they are suffering from hunger. They then meet in a forest (which is totally incongruous in the climate that has been described) a hermit named Gériaume, who shows them the two roads leading to Babylon, which is, in fact, Cairo. One road is easy to travel on but takes a year; the other road is shorter and can be traveled in two weeks, but it is full of dangers. However, this is the road Huon chooses to take. Gériaume informs him that this road passes through the immense forest where Aubéron rules. He is king of the dwarfs and a great magician. If the travelers do not respond to his calls, he will use his spells to terrify them but will not be able to do anything against them. If they do answer his calls, they will fall into his power.

> You must cross through a vast and very formidable forest, which is at least forty leagues long. Now in this forest is a dwarf who is no more than three feet in height, but whose beauty eclipses that of the summer sun. His name is Aubéron. Once they have entered this wood, none can escape him. If ever they address a word to him and once they have spent an instant near him, they will no longer ever be able to leave.
>
> I must add that this dwarf possesses three great powers: when you seek to travel through this forest, before you have crossed twelve leagues, you will find him standing in your way. He will speak the name of majestic God in such wise that none can fail to be impressed,

> and if you refuse to speak to this noble person, he will become so furious that you will become terrified, for he will make it rainy and blustery, he will break the trees and tear them to pieces; after this demonstration he will make appear a river so large that a large boat could sail down it… . But take it as written, all of this is naught but illusion …
>
> I repeat, and you will be wrong not to believe it, for it is in your best interest, do your utmost to refrain from speaking a single word, for if you speak to him, you shall never be able to escape, and with your answer you shall have lost everything (XXIV).

It should be noted that the author is here exploiting a widespread superstition of the Middle Ages, which held that any person who spoke to spirits would fall into their power.

Other instructions were added to the ones we just related. Huon sets off on the perilous road but faints from hunger. He dismounts and sorrowfully converses with his companions.

> But while they were speaking like this, a little man suddenly appeared out of the dense forest, and I will set down his portrait at once. He was as handsome as the summer sun, and his garb was made from a piece of striped silk with thirty bands of pure gold bound to the sides by silken threads. He carried a bow that he wielded with great skill: the string was of real silk, and the arrow was wondrous as well, for any animal created by God, powerful as it may be, could not escape this shot when it was loosed at the hunter’s pleasure.
>
> Around his neck hung a horn of resplendent ivory, adorned with fine bands of gold: it was crafted by fairies on an island in the middle of the sea. One of these fairies bestowed the following virtue upon it: anyone suffering from illness that heard it sound and echo would immediately be restored to health, no matter how grave their affliction. The second fairy granted it a much more precious gift: if anyone who was starving heard the horn, they would immediately be sated, and if he had thirst, that would be slaked. The third was even more generous: any person who heard the call and sound of this horn, no matter how great their grief, would be unable to stop from singing. But the fourth fairy wished to outdo all her sisters by granting to it the power I am about to describe to you: whatever the land, frontier, or kingdom, from the Dry Tree to the other side of the sea, to which one

managed to carry the horn, if he made it sound and echo, Aubéron would hear it in his city of Monmur (XXV).

Aubéron started blowing his horn, and Huon and his companions began singing, and their hunger vanished. The terrified Gériaume continued to urge Huon to beware. All of them took flight, and Aubéron grew wrathful because of it: “he struck the horn with one of his fingers and wind and tempest rose up immediately.” He then created a large river that momentarily stopped the fugitives. They resumed their flight, but Aubéron loomed up at the entrance to a bridge and implored them to answer him. The men from Bordeaux galloped away, but the dwarf then blew his horn, and they stopped and started singing. Drunk with rage, Aubéron gave the order to slaughter them, but Gloriant, the fay knight, urged him to try one more time, and this time he was successful. Huon responded to Aubéron when he heard his proposals. The little king offered to help him in his undertaking to give him an abundance of food and drink, and to then restore his freedom. He then began to speak of himself:

> Julius Caesar is my father and raised me tenderly, and the Fay Morgue of such great beauty is my mother … . At my birth, there was great rejoicing: all the knights of the kingdom were invited, and the fairies visited my mother. One of them probably felt slighted, because she gave me the gift you can see: I am a small, hunchbacked dwarf. In fact, I remained a dwarf—alas!—and stopped growing after I was three years of age. When the fairy saw the result of the spell she had cast on me, she wished to improve my situation and granted me one privilege: after the Lord, I would be the most handsome man that ever lived …
>
> The second fairy was more generous. Thanks to her I know what everyone is planning and feeling. I can say what he has done and I know his most secret sin.
>
> The third fairy gave me even more: to improve my lot and favor me, she granted me the following gift: whatever the land, frontier, or kingdom, all the way to the Dry Tree, and in any place one can go, wherever I wish to be in God’s name, I am there as I will as soon as I ask it, accompanied by as many men as I need.
>
> And when I wished to build a palace …, I did so at once, have no doubt, and I also have all the food I want and all the drink I could desire. I was born at Monmur, which stands far from here by at least

four hundred leagues, and yet I can make my way there faster than a horse can travel an acre of land.

After a short interruption from Huon, Aubéron continues:

The fourth fairy deserves the highest praise, for this is the gift she bestowed upon me. All birds, beasts, and wild boars, no matter how ferocious and savage, come to me of their own free will once I wave to them with my hand. In addition to this, she granted me another privilege: I know all the secrets of paradise, and I can hear the angels singing high in the sky, I know that I will never grow old, and at the end, when I wish to die, my throne sits waiting next to God (XXVIII).

No other dwarf in Western literature is possessed of such powers, which are then showcased in the rest of the story. Aubéron gives lodging to Huon and his men, and he gives the hero a magic hanap[*8] to drink from that possesses the power to soak any drinker who is not entirely free from sin. He then offers his friendship and help to Huon, on the condition that the knight remains virtuous, and he gives him the marvelous hanap.

Huon takes his leave of Aubéron and makes his way to Tormont, where he overcomes its lord and frees the Christians imprisoned there with the aid of the dwarf, whom he has called to the rescue. He then heads to Dunostre, the castle of the giant Orgueilleux,[†9] which is defended by two automatons. With the aid of his cousin, the fair damsel Sébile, Huon enters the fortress, awakens the giant, and gives him time to arm himself. In exchange for this favor, Orgueilleux allows him to try on a wondrous coat of mail that he stole from Aubéron, and which no one can wear unless he is as pure as a newborn child and virgin of all mortal sin. To the great dismay of the giant, Huon has no trouble putting on the hauberk, and then he kills Orgueilleux.

Huon than leaves alone for Babylon, but his journey is quickly brought to a halt by the sea, which he cannot cross. He is bemoaning his fate when a beast arrives that is swimming faster than a salmon and looks like a sprite. It steps ashore and removes its skin. Our hero finds himself facing a handsome man. It is the sprite Malabron, Aubéron’s vassal, condemned to be a sea sprite for thirty years. Malabron carries Huon to the other side of the Red Sea.

The gallant knight eventually enters the palace of Gaudisse, kisses Esclarmonde, and delivers the message Charlemagne gave him. The furious emir has him imprisoned. Huon will be executed in one year. Thanks to Esclarmonde, who promises to convert him, the hero finds it easy to endure

his captivity. Gaudisse has him taken from his dungeon cell to fight Agrapart, the brother of Orgueilleux, whom no one wishes to face. Huon is victorious. He next recovers his magical horn, calls Aubéron, and with his help massacres all the pagans that refuse baptism. He beheads Gaudisse, then pulls out four of his molars and rips off his beard.

His mission accomplished, Huon sets sail for France with Esclarmonde, but Aubéron has made him promise to not share her bed before marrying her in Rome. The young man forgets his oath, and a storm destroys his ship. Shipwrecked on the Isle of Moses, three leagues from Hell, Huon loses Esclarmonde, who has been captured by pirates. After many twists and turns, he finds her again, arrives in Bordeaux, and after several last-minute adventures, justice is done to him thanks to Aubéron, who undertakes a decisive approach to Charlemagne. Before vanishing, the little king of Faery bequeaths his kingdom to Huon.

These are the broad lines of the story in which Aubéron holds a major place and appears as a veritable deus ex machina. There are no lack of details about this dwarf and his powers, but are they truly pertinent? Are they the actual prerogatives of these creatures? This is what we shall now examine.

THE MAGICAL OBJECTS

Every fantastic being is expected to own magical objects that reinforce his existing abilities or make them concrete. Aubéron has a chair, a bow, a hanap, and a horn. The arrogant giant stole a coat of mail from him. So what does the text have to say about these marvels?

The Chair

Aubéron sits on a throne (*fautesdeuf*, “armchair”) whose feet are made of pure gold and on which the bow of the god of Love is carved. The fairies crafted it on an island. They offered it to Alexander the Great, who gave it to Julius Caesar, Aubéron’s father. This throne possesses great virtues (*dinités*): if it falls into a fire it will not burn, and whoever sits on it is safe, as no venom can poison him. In fact, the poison is discovered as soon as it is present.

The poet is combining many traditions here. The island of the fairies is most likely Avalon, the Isle of Apples in the *Vita Merlini.* This is the island

to which the mortally wounded Arthur was taken,[7] the island to which a gondola pulled by a swan brings Branguemuer, the son of King Guingamer and the fairy Brangepart,[8] and the island from where the fairies come in search of the elect in a glass boat. The mention of Alexander and Caesar is almost obligatory: the Macedonian conqueror is regarded as the mirror of all chivalry, and since the time Leo of Naples translated his legendary life into Latin in the tenth century, no one was unfamiliar with his exploits.[9] At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Caesar had become the model of the knight king, combining intellect and audacity and always ready to hasten to the help of his friends. The bow of Love is most likely a reminiscence related to Ovid: during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Latin poet was so in vogue that there was no hesitation in referring to this period as the Ovidian Age (*aetas Ovidiana*).

In keeping with its supernatural origins, the chair cannot be destroyed by fire. I do not share Marguerite Rossi's view that we should see this as an adaptation of the salamander skin motif. This is simply how the poet emphasizes the wondrous nature of this piece of furniture and highlights Aubéron's prestige. In fact, this motif is never used in *Huon de Bordeaux*, nor in its continuations, *Esclarmonde* and *Huon et les Géants* (Huon and the Giants), for example.[10] Poison and venom are never mentioned in the following adventures. It is quite possible that our author is adopting here a motif from Arthurian literature, that of the Siege Perilous on which only the chosen one may sit. On a more general level of interpretation, it involves a distinctive form of a very widespread theme reflecting the fear that men of the Middle Ages and antiquity felt at the possibility of dying by poison. The Western literature of the eleventh and thirteenth centuries introduces many objects that are expressive of this fear. In the chansons de geste of *Fierabras* and *Aye d'Avignon*, for example, we have a belt and a ring that not only protect their wearer from poison but hunger as well. To the best of my knowledge, however, there is no other chair besides that of Aubéron that possesses the ability to detect poisons and counter their effects. In general, this virtue is attributed to precious stones, and knowledge of them was spread via the lapidaries. Damigeron in the ninth century, followed by Arnoldus Saxo around 1220, tell us that aetite, eagle stone, offers protection against poison. According to the great encyclopedists of the thirteenth century—Bartholomaeus Anglicus (or Bartholomew the Englishman), Thomas of Cantimpré, and Vincent of Beauvais—diamond, jacinth, and draconite had

the same power.[11] We should note that other gems provided protection from fire and that Aubéron's throne may well have been inlaid with them.

In fact, a long legendary and literary tradition describes the thrones of important sovereigns and states that they were covered with precious stones. An early allusion can be found in Revelation (4:2–3), and many others in the religious literature, such as the *Visio Tnugdali* (Vision of Tnugdalus) and *Rédemption*. A mosaic in the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna depicts the Virgin Mary and Jesus sitting on a throne highlighted with gems. Oddly enough, *The Letter of Prester John,* which incidentally represents a veritable synthesis of the use of gems in architecture and furniture, provides us no description of such chairs. We can assume that the author of *Huon de Bordeaux* has retained the virtue of such gems without mentioning them, thereby creating a new wondrous object, Aubéron's throne, which we can be fairly confident in recognizing as an attribute of sovereignty.

The Bow

Aubéron carries a bow that never misses its mark. Along with the hauberk, this is the only item that has not been crafted by the fairies. We should keep this important detail in mind. Marguerite Rossi compares it to Tristan's bow, "Fail-naught," but this kind of weapon does not originally belong to the romance or epic. It comes from mythological tales or ancient myths that have been more or less euhemerized. The bow owned by the little king of Faery should be compared to Celtic or Germanic traditions. I am thinking here of the Gae Bolga, the magical spear of the god Lugh: it bursts into flame, always hits its target, and returns to the hand of the person who cast it. There is also the hammer of the well-known Germanic god Thor, which also never misses its mark and returns like a boomerang. In both cases, however, the comparison is rather arbitrary. Does this mean that the bow must remain a mystery?

Without denying for a moment that I am entering into the realm of hypothesis, I believe experience teaches us that motifs that are left unpursued ("blind motifs"), namely, those that play no further role in the plot of a story, still have a reason for existence. They may be the vestiges of an older version, an adventure whose meaning has been lost and whose elements the poet is repeating mechanically. One law of adaptations and reworkings could be stated this way: "Add often, subtract rarely!" Every detail carries meaning. This explains, among other things, the respect of the authors for their sources, an attitude that sometimes leads them to reproduce bookish information that

has been contradicted by reality. With the bow and the hauberk, we have one of the means to get a more precise picture of Aubéron's nature. We have grasped the thread that connects this figure to his origins, and there is nothing more valuable. Before following that thread, let us quickly consider the hauberk.

The Hauberk

Thanks to Sébile, the daughter of Count Guinemer of Saint-Omer, who stops the automatons that prevent entry into the castle of Dunostre, Huon is able to slip into the lair of Orgueilleux. Once awake, the giant tells him:

> I have also waged war against Aubéron the Fay, whose enchantments and spells (*encanterie*) could do nothing against me. It is from him, indeed, that I have stolen this palace as well as the hauberk adorned with brass wire. No one will be defeated in combat once he has passed his head through the opening of this coat of mail. However, not just anyone who wishes may put it on, because the inscription that appears on the collar says that no person can put on the hauberk if he be not a worthy man without mortal sin, beyond reproach, and as pure as a newborn, and the mother who bore him must never have desired any other man but her husband, without which he could not don this coat of mail …
>
> The power of the hauberk is great: he who puts it on his back cannot drown, by Mohamet! I have experienced this personally (XLIV).

We should note, incidentally, two things here. Orgueilleux the giant should never have been able to put on this coat of mail if the stated conditions —purity and so forth—were in place. During the Middle Ages, giants were synonymous with pride, the gravest sin, and *démesure* (immoderation). If he was able to wear it, it is either due to carelessness on the part of the author, or it belies the work of a churchman to draw a pagan marvel over to the side of Christian supernaturalism, which seems to be the case. But there is something much more important going on here. By all appearances, Huon, Aubéron, and Orgueilleux were able to wear the hauberk. It just so happens that these individuals are not all the same height: we have a dwarf, a man, and a giant, so the clothing of one cannot fit the other, unless this garment adjusts to the size of the wearer. But the text is mute on this point, and no medieval romance author worth his salt would fail to make use of a motif as wondrous as that of a piece of clothing that adjusted to the size of the person who put it

on. So we may ask, did this situation come about due to the poet's carelessness and inconsistency, or is it a clearly truncated motif? We will need to find the answer to such questions, but it is yet too soon to do so.

Orgueilleux therefore lends the hauberk to Huon, who puts it on without any trouble. The coat fits him like a glove, proving his moral rectitude and his mother's purity. Without realizing it, the hero has undergone a "trial of virtue" (Ger. *Tugendprobe*), of the sort for which the texts offer us hundreds of examples.[12] The garment is only used once in the story. The reptile guarding the fountain in the garden of the emir, Gaudisse, can do nothing against Huon:

> Here is the fountain: the water flowing there comes from the river of Eden. Any woman, worn out by pleasure as she may be, will become as much a maiden again as she was the day of her birth, provided she drink a little of this water …
>
> The water was entrusted to a serpent guard; no wicked or treacherous man who broke his promise could stick his finger in it. If he did, he would die …
>
> Huon went to the spring and the serpent bowed to him because of the power of the hauberk (LV–LVI).

The gallant knight has, however, already broken the word he gave to Aubéron. He would therefore be unable to approach the fountain if he was not wearing that coat of mail.

While it had belonged to Aubéron, the hauberk was not a gift. Huon had won it though his valor and purity, but it is surprising that he did not lose it when he did uphold his vow. Here the poet is contravening an unspoken law of heroic tales (a good example of which can be found in the French medieval lay *Desiré*).

The hauberk makes one invulnerable, which is a commonplace motif. Before facing Roland, Olivier received from the Jew Joachim a hauberk that no sword could pierce. The fragment of the Germanic romance titled *Abor und das Meerweib* exhibits a shirt possessed of similar powers.[13] This motif is not as frequent as one might expect, probably because it diminishes the value of heroic prowess—what merit does a hero achieve if he knows he is invulnerable?—and dilutes the significance of the chivalrous and initiatory adventure. Clad in such a hauberk, the most cowardly man becomes courageous and even the implicit, or explicit, allusion to the fact that only a brave man could wear it is not enough to make up for the loss of prestige to

someone who has vanquished an opponent by means of magic—even white magic that has its source in Faery. Medieval writers clearly felt the ambiguity of magic objects and in the chanson de geste of *Fierabras*, for example, a magic belt that solves all problems is lost.[14] In Wirnt von Grafenberg's *Wigalois* (circa 1220), brigands steal from the hero a belt that increases his strength, so he fully deserves the glory attached to his victories.[15]

Dimitri Scheludko does not engage in any way with the nature of the hauberk and instead speaks of a simple garment, which allows him to find numerous parallels in later tales, although he does not cite any example taken from the Middle Ages.[16] Going even further, he writes: "If the hauberk does not vanish in water and cannot be consumed by fire, it is an echo of the legend of Christ's seamless tunic, which was spread at the beginning of the thirteenth century thanks to its localization in the Cathedral of Trier."[17] Although appealing, the comparison is inconclusive since it is unaccompanied by any proof.[18] It is probably not very helpful to appeal to this legend to explain the virtues of Aubéron's hauberk.[19] Our author was a well-educated churchman, and he could have found the motif in other texts, such as *Girart de Vienne* (ca. 1205–1225), for example.

Let me repeat that Aubéron, such as he appears in *Huon de Bordeaux*, is a composite figure made up of different elements drawn from oral traditions and other texts. Researchers have long recognized the importance of the Germanic traditions, without truly being able to pin them down. The possession of the hauberk is revealing in this regard.

Throughout the medieval Germanic-speaking world, dwarfs are primarily smiths, and when they feel friendship toward a mortal, they offer him creations from their forge. In the *Eckenlied* (ca. 1250), they appear to have forged the sword of the king Duodlieb;[20] in the thirteenth-century Arthurian romance *Garel,* composed by the poet known as Der Pleier, Albewin, the king of the dwarfs, offers Garel a ring that gives him the strength of twelve men, a sword, and a suit of armor that he personally forged.[21] In the romance bearing his name, Seifrid de Ardemont receives a shield and sword from a dwarf named Lorandin.[22] Walberan, who rules over the dwarfs of the Armenian mountains and an inhabitant of the Judea in the Caucasus (obligatory exoticism) owns an Arabian gold coat of mail tempered in salamander blood.[23] Germanic dwarfs knew all the secrets of the forge, a theme that would later have a heyday in the collections of tales that became

fashionable in the age of Romanticism. In the hauberk, we can see a vestige of Aubéron's connection to the race of these dwarf blacksmiths. The bow is another such vestige: in the folk beliefs of the early Middle Ages, it was said that these creatures loosed their shot on men and beasts, which caused illnesses and epizootic diseases.

One other detail deserves our attention. Orgueilleux told Huon: "I also waged war against Aubéron the Fay, whose enchantments and spells could do naught to me." This is a surprising outburst, and one that contradicts practically everything we know about giants from courtly romance and Germanic literature. These creatures never possess a shred of magical power except in Norse and Celtic mythology. Giants are either a kind of wild man, or they are exotic monsters like the giants of Malprose in the *Chanson de Roland* (The Song of Roland); they are mindless brutes that the pagans use as their advance troops, their champions, the gatekeepers of their fortresses, and the defenders of their military outposts. In fact, our giant is out of place in the narrative, and the entire episode palely reflects a similar event in the aforementioned Irish legend of Fergus mac Léti:[24] in this story, a dwarf urges a knight to conquer a castle, which the plot of the story justifies, and gives him a shield to aid him in his task. In reusing the framework of this episode, the author of *Huon de Bordeaux* makes some blunders, and the seams remain visible. But the hauberk still retains a certain value nonetheless: it corroborates the words of Aubéron and his love of Christian and chivalrous virtues. We should recall that the little king of Faery cannot tolerate sin or evil.

The Hanap

Aubéron owns a hanap, in which we can easily recognize a secularized form of the horn of plenty known from classical antiquity. Here is the description:

> "Huon," said Aubéron, "look at this hanap; it is completely empty, isn't it?"
>
> He then set it on the table.
>
> "Huon, my friend, you are going to witness the great power Jesus has placed in me; in Faery, my desires are fulfilled and you are about to prove this is so. You see this precious hanap of gold; it is absolutely empty, but it will fill up again."
>
> He drew a circle with his right hand around the hanap three times, then he made the sign of Majestic God over it. The hanap was

immediately full with wine and nectar. Then Aubéron said:

> "Huon, listen to me. You have seen what I just did. It is by the will of God that this hanap has this power. But its virtue is yet more eminent, for if all the men still living and those that are dead were to gather here, this hanap would supply them with enough wine, and all the drinks that one could wish, provided it was a virtuous man that held it. For, this I will tell you, no one can drink from it if he is not virtuous and beyond reproach, if he is not pure and free of all mortal sin. To the contrary, at the moment a wicked man lays his hand on it, the power of the hanap will flee him at once (XXX).

The nature of this vessel is thus twofold: it is inexhaustible and can slake the thirst of the living and the resurrected dead, but its possessor should not speak any lie and the drinker must not be a criminal; otherwise the drink will disappear. The hanap recalls almost precisely the Grail of the romances of the Round Table, and it is the expression of a theme we can find nearly throughout the Indo-European sphere. It can always be recognized despite its various transformations, since its function remains constant. The oldest testimonies have been gathered from the Ossetians of the Caucasus region, where they have been found in the great collection of epic texts known as the Nart Sagas.[25]

This kind of object is also mentioned frequently in Celtic narratives, where it displays a connection with the otherworld. However, there are few vessels, cups, cauldrons, or baskets that possess the twofold nature of Aubéron's hanap or that of the cup of the Alaegatae in the Nart Sagas. Among the thirteen treasures of the Island of Britain are an inexhaustible food hamper, a cauldron that ceaselessly refills itself, and a drinking horn that never empties and is capable of testing the courage of men and the fidelity of women. These are objects that we see again in the Irish mythological tale concerning the quest imposed by the god Lugh on the three sons of Tuirenn, and in the medieval Welsh tale *Culhwch ac Olwen* in relation to the challenges issued by the giant Ysbadadden to his daughter's suitor.[26] These parallels all speak in favor of a Celtic source with respect to the hanap, and the objects most similar to it are the hamper of Gwyddneu Garanhir, which can feed the entire world in groups of three times nine men and gives each one what he wishes to eat; the drinking horn of Gwlgawt Gogodin, which is both discriminating and inexhaustible and figures in many Irish and Welsh tales; and the bowl named Dysgl, attributed to Rhydderch the Learned,

bringing to each person whatever he wishes to eat.[27] Further afield, but still related to these objects are the cauldron of Dagda, a builder god that is a kind of *Dis Pater*, and that of Penn Annwn and Tyrnog, which cannot boil the foods of a coward, and the cup of Manannán mac Lir, the king or god of the sea, which breaks if someone speaking tells a lie. There are a plethora of objects of abundance and revelation that can be found throughout the Celtic sphere. They traveled from there into France and thence into the Germanic realm.

THE HORN

Aubéron's horn most likely has the same origin, but the author of *Huon de Bordeaux* has obviously compounded several traditions together: in fact, one magical object never possesses this many powers. Like the hanap, it is a horn of plenty, although in the *Roman d'Aubéron* it no longer has its food-bestowing role.[28] It is a horn whose call can be heard over the entire surface of the earth; it restores health to whoever hears it; Aubéron can create a storm by touching it with his finger, and when he strikes it with his bow, his servants come running; and when the little king blows it, all that hear it begin to sing and dance. However, once it enters Huon's hands, the horn no longer possesses all these virtues. It is good for calling for aid and for making people dance. This detail seems to indicate that abilities belonging to Aubéron alone were transferred to his horn.

Now that we have reached the end of this presentation of magical objects, it is strikingly clear that we are dealing with a literary recuperation of mythic themes, or simply legendary ones, that had managed to survive in oral traditions. A functional analysis of these objects clearly shows that each of them belongs not to just to one of the three Indo-European functions, but to several. The hanap, for example, is in the domain of the Third Function (abundance) but also the First Function (magical discrimination, recognition of the qualities that make a good ruler). An amalgamation of this sort demands that we exercise caution in its interpretation. Taken on their own, the motifs are all possessed of great antiquity, but in the way they are presented in *Huon de Bordeaux*, they are incapable of providing a solid basis for research. Our quest for the true nature of Aubéron and, beyond that, the true nature of the dwarfs of the Middle Ages, must continue elsewhere.

THE LEGENDS OF ALBERÎCH

From Norse Sagas and Germanic Tales

Contrary to what has been stated on various occasions by those who have studied Aubéron, very few dwarfs in the Germanic regions bear the name of Alberîch (a name that means “Powerful Elf” or “Powerful in Elves”), which obviously applies to a ruler. I have counted more than one hundred dwarfs in Medieval German literature between 1150 and 1340, only two of whom are named Alberîch. The name appears in its Norse form (Álfrikr) in the *Þiðrekssaga af Bern* (Saga of Thidrek of Bern), a Norse compilation from the middle of the thirteenth century. But let us start our investigation by learning more about the most famous Alberîch, the one who appears in the *Nibelungenlied* (Lay of the Nibelungs).

ALBERÎCH AND SIEGFRIED

Composed in southern Germany during the earliest years of the thirteenth century (but based on much earlier source texts), the *Nibelungenlied* tells us how Siegfried met Alberîch.[1] During his wanderings, the hero comes to the foot of a mountain one day, where he sees a band of determined men gathered around the treasure of the Nibelungs. The sons of this king, Nibelung (most likely the king’s eldest son, as he bore the same name as his father) and Schilbung, have had the treasure carried out of a cave so that they could divide it between each other. Failing to agree on their share, they asked Siegfried to oversee the division of the treasure, in return for which they would give him the sword Balmung. Siegfried keeps his promise, but Nibelung and Schilbung are dissatisfied with the divvying up of the wealth and start quarreling with the hero. He slays them along with twelve of their friends (described as “giants full of vigor”), then brings to heel seven hundred warriors from the land of the Nibelungs, who surrender the kingdom and its strongholds to him. The text does not specify the geographical location of this mysterious empire, over which Siegfried then becomes king.

Alberîch, a dwarf for whom the guardianship of the treasure was intended, wishes to avenge his masters. Clad in his magic cape,[*10] a garment that makes him invisible,[2] he attacks Siegfried. He is defeated and forced to swear fealty to the knight, who steals his magic cape and entrusts him with guarding the treasure. This treasure is taken back into the mountain, which by all evidence is hollow.

After accompanying Gunther, the king of the Burgundians, to Iceland in his quest for a bride (Brünhild, in this instance), Siegfried returns to the land of the Nibelungs' on the pretext of seeking their aid, but in reality to test their loyalty and reassert his right to rule. He disguises himself, and as he is refused entry to the castle for this reason, he first defeats a giant who is acting as door guard: "The noise of terrible combat was heard from afar, across the mountain." Alberîch then arms himself: "He was a very grim and hardy dwarf. He wore a great helm and his body was covered by a coat of mail, and he held a heavy gold whip in his hand. He rushed upon Siegfried with great force."[3] The hero fought him hand to hand: "Using only his mighty fists, he hurled himself upon Alberîch. He seized the old man, white with age, by his beard,"[4] overcame him, bound him, then revealed his identity.

Alberîch makes one final appearance in the story when, after Siegfried has been murdered, Kriemhild wishes for the Nibelungen treasure to be transported to Worms.

The information is fairly succinct: Alberîch is an old man with a beard who is endowed with considerable strength. *Biterolf and Dietrich*, an epic written around 1260, alludes to Siegfried's battle with Alberîch and says that this dwarf possessed the strength of twenty men.[5] We should emphasize that this strength is not connected to the possession of any kind of magic object. This clearly shows that the motif of the physical weakness of dwarfs, which was spread around the courts of the thirteenth century, is not an original one.

Despite the reluctance felt by the author of the *Nibelungenlied* about recounting Siegfried's wondrous adventures, he did retain some elements that make it possible to pin down a little better the personality and nature of Alberîch.

The dwarf lives in a mountainous country, or even inside a mountain—one where treasure has been hidden. The inhabitants of these lands remain imprecisely defined, but there are giants and most likely dwarfs, those over whom Alberîch is ruler. The names of the sovereigns of this land are quite revealing. Nibelung is formed from *nibel-*, "mist, fog, cloud" (cf. Old Norse

nifl; it is also related to Latin *nebula*) and *-ing/-ung*, a Germanic suffix that establishes a relationship of belonging and kinship or lineage, such as we find in the word Merovingians, the sons of Merovech. Etymologically, *Nibelung* therefore refers to the "descendant or son of the mist," which makes the land that takes its name from him a mythical empire comparable to the Norse Niflheimr, the "World of the Mist," one of the names given to the realm of the dead in ancient Scandinavian mythology. It is essential that we do not underestimate the importance of this revelation.

Nibelung has a brother, Schilbung, whose name is also quite transparent. It, too, is formed with the help of the suffix *-ing/-ung*, while the first element, *schilb-*, comes from the Proto-Indo-European root *skilp* (cf. Latin *scirpus*, "bulrush"), which brings us back to the aquatic world.[*11]

It so happens that *nibel-* allows us to postulate a Proto-Indo-European root *nebh-*, which is used to form numerous place-names involving bodies of water. Mist is one form taken by water, as it is released by waves and rivers. It is a mere coincidence that the Norse otherworld, Niflheimr, is surrounded by raging rivers? The hypothesis therefore leads to the establishment of a connection between Alberîch's masters and water. Is this hypothesis tenable?

To determine the answer, we must refer back to the Norse references regarding the legend of Siegfried, especially to the *Reginsmál* (the Speech of Reginn), which has come down to us as part of the *Poetic Edda.* This Norse poem has the virtue of describing the famous treasure of the Nibelungs, a treasure whose major role as a connection between Siegfried and Alberîch is self-evident.

The treasure is one of the direct causes of Siegfried's death. The *Nibelungenlied* is built around the conflict of two powers, that of our hero and that of the Burgundians. It so happens that during the Middle Ages, he who is rich is also powerful—a single adjective, Middle High German *rîch*, expresses this dual recognition—and such a man can demonstrate his largesse to his vassals and thus ensure their loyalty. He can pay mercenaries and therefore display a splendor that ensures his renown. Thanks to this treasure, Siegfried would have the wherewithal to prevail over the Burgundians, which creates an intolerable situation for Hagen, who is Gunther's vassal and the great defender of the Burgundians' honor (in the medieval sense of the word). As a result, Hagen and his allies murder Siegfried for precisely this reason. The treasure, which comes from the otherworld, is cursed in some way or another, and the *Reginsmál* informs us of the reason.

This gold was originally the financial reparation that the gods Odin, Hœnir, and Loki had to pay out for the murder of Otr, one of the sons of King Hreidmar. Loki, the discordant and enigmatic god who is most often the perpetrator of wicked deeds, procured the gold in the following manner. He went fishing for the dwarf Andvari who was swimming below a waterfall in the form of a pike, and then demanded that his prisoner give him the treasure he was guarding. Andvari did so, but kept a ring. Loki spotted it and took it, at which point Andvari cursed the treasure:

That gold,
which Gust owned,
Will be the death of two brothers,
and cause of strife between eight princes;
my treasure will be of no use to anyone.[6]

The treasure was taken by Fáfnir, the second son of Hreidmar, for his hoard. He transformed himself into a dragon to prevent anyone from stealing it. Siegfried slays the dragon—an episode that is quite well known thanks to Wagner's *Ring Cycle*—and then slays Fáfnir's brother, Reginn, also for the treasure. This is how the first part of Andvari's curse is fulfilled.

We can establish a parallel between the *Reginsmál* and the *Nibelungenlied*—while not overlooking the fact that the legend of Siegfried is originally Frankish and not Scandinavian—as illustrated by the following diagram:

	Dwarf	Father	Sons
Nibelungenlied	Alberich	Nibelung	Nibelung and Schilbung
Reginsmál	Andvari	Hreidmar	Fáfnir and Reginn

All these figures have a connection with water—as is evident in the metamorphosis of Andvari—although in the *Reginsmál* the names are less expressive. If we accept that the Scandinavian poet drew his material from old Frankish (German) lays, we can see in *Reginn* the Norse form of the continental Germanic *regen*, meaning "rain," but especially "running water." *Regen* is, for example, the name of the river that flows through Regensburg in Germany. We can separate the suffix *-nir* in Fáfnir from the stem *fáf-*. The suffix *-nir* is used to indicate a relationship of sovereignty, as in Odin's title *Jólnir*, which means "Master of *Jól* "; in other words, "Master of Yule (the Yuletide)." A possible etymology for the stem *fáf*would be the Proto-Indo-European root *pap-*, *from which the Latin word* pōpulus, "poplar," is derived.

In favor of these etymological deductions, we can point out several facts that are not at all questionable: first and foremost, the brother of Fáfnir and Reginn is named Otr, which literally means “otter”; secondly, Andvari takes the form of a pike; and thirdly, the treasure comes from the water and, following the death of Siegfried, returns there. The *Nibelungenlied* recounts how Hagen sinks this treasure into the Rhine.

The Legend of Sigurðr/Siegfried: Rock of Ramsund, Södermanland, Sweden. On the left we can see the corpse of Reginn and the forge.

What we are dealing with here is certainly an ancient myth relating to water that has been integrated into the legend of Siegfried. The name of the dwarf in the *Reginsmál* is quite curious: Andvari, in fact, means “Guardian of the Breath” in the sense of the vital principle. It so happens that Old Norse *andi/önd,* meaning “breath, wind, spirit,” is the word regularly employed by clerics to translate *animus* and *anima*. “Andvari” clearly corresponds to a being from the otherworld, and the equivalence *andi = animus/anima* accentuates the aquatic nature of this dwarf. In fact, the German word for soul is *Seele,* a derivative of the Gothic *saiwala*, “small lake,” which is a clear indication that water occupied a central place in the beliefs of the ancient Germans concerning the vital principle (*animus*), with the associated notion of breath being merely an “import” that took place during the conversion to Christianity.

Does Alberîch—whose name, as indicated earlier, means “powerful elf ” or “powerful in elves”—have any relationship with the element of water? The question is justified if we acknowledge that the *Reginsmál* has preserved features of the legend that are much older than those in the *Nibelungenlied.*

The lexeme *alb/alf-*, “elf,” derives from the Proto-Indo-European root *albh-*, whose primary meaning is “white, clear” (cf. Latin *albus*). This root

also underlies the name of the famous Central European river the Elbe and the Old Norse noun *elfr*, which means “river.” In Old High German, the swan is called *alpiz* and the alder, *albari,* a tree that prefers wetlands and areas near water.

For now, we should keep in mind the essential element I hope to draw out of these texts: the family of creatures to which Alberîch belongs is closely connected to water in its two most ancient symbolic forms: life—associated with the *animus*—and death—*nibel*, *nifl.* The rest of my investigation will allow us to be even more precise.

ALBERÎCH AND ORTNIT

Ortnit, a thirteenth-century courtly epic, is interesting not only because it raises the question of the existence of literary relations between Medieval Russia and Germany, but also because it contains a wealth of motifs from myth and legend. The story consists of two major sections that are unequal in size, of which only the first (str. 1–433) is relevant to the subject of our study.[7] This part is centered on the theme of the bridal quest, and Alberîch appears here often; in fact, his presence could be said to be indispensable to the story. The text is teeming with details whose significance is not always immediately perceptible, so we shall follow it step by step when it recounts how Ortnit met Alberîch.

On the advice of his vassals, Ortnit, king of Lombardy, decides to get married in order to ensure his lineage. He sets his choice on the daughter of Machorel, the Sultan of Syria, in fact Malek-al-Adel, who lives on Montabur (Mount Tabor). Unfortunately, Machorel wishes to wed his own daughter and rejects all requests for marriage, systematically having the messengers of these requests beheaded. Because of the enormous dangers that accompany Ortnit’s choice, his council of barons seeks to dissuade the young king.

Following a dream, Ortnit decided to set off alone in search of adventure. He has visibly not yet proven himself. On his insistence, his mother gives him a wondrous ring set with a stone. She tells him: “If you seek adventure, I shall give you a gift so that you only love me all the more. When you leave, I shall give you this ring” (str. 78). She forbids him from ever parting with it and tells him its value will only reveal itself gradually. His mother goes on to say: “Everywhere you can travel on horseback, make it shine. It will indicate if adventure is imminent” (str. 85). The ring therefore works like a kind of compass whose magnetic pole is chivalrous adventure, and this is exactly how Ortnit uses it, “lifting his hand and the ring toward the sun” (str. 87). “In

the morning, the sun pierced the clouds; the gallant knight often looked at the ring and its stone. He then found a trail on the green grass of a meadow" (str. 88). It is obvious that the sun plays a major role in this episode: it causes the ring to sparkle when it indicates the right direction, but just what this role entails remains unexplained. Its meaning will become clear when we discover the content of the adventure.

Still guided by the glow of his ring, Ortnit crosses through a wild land and makes his way to an idyllic, enchanting place (*locus amoenus*), where he sees an individual that looks like a four-year-old child asleep beneath a linden tree. Upon seeing the beauty of this creature, he has no idea what to do: "You are so beautiful that I dare do nothing to you. If only God willed that you were my son!" (str. 95), he says before alighting from his horse. After a final hesitation, he takes the child into his arms. The other being wakes up and strikes Ortnit so hard with his fist that he is dazed as much by this as by the brutality of this reaction. After a rough but brief struggle set off by the child's mocking laughter, Ortnit gains the upper hand (although the text implies that the child intentionally lets him win; str. 105), and the rest of the adventure confirms this impression. For reasons that we shall soon discover, the child was actually waiting for this encounter to occur.

The child calls for mercy, and in exchange for his freedom he offers Ortnit a suit of armor, leg guards, a shield, a helmet, and a sword made by dwarfs in the mountain of Goukelsachs. The king initially refuses and asks his adversary for his name, and this is what he is told in response:

> "I am a wild dwarf and many mountains and valleys are subject to me … . My name is Alberîch … and I am a king like you. My companions say that I am loyal. However large your lands may be, I have three times more than you … . You rule over what is on the earth and I do as I please with what lies below (str. 118–29)."
>
> We also learn that Alberîch is five hundred years old.

Ortnit, to whom the dwarf's name means nothing, threatens him with death if he does not lend him his aid in his bridal quest. Alberîch accepts as soon as he learns that the person he has chosen is equal in rank to the king, and he adds that he is familiar with Machorel and his country. Ortnit then demands he provide pledges of his good will. Alberîch has none to give him and he suggests to the hero that he take the armor offered earlier. A discussion ensues, and in this verbal joust, Alberîch gets the upper hand over Ortnit. Alberîch then demands that the king give him the ring he owns and,

when the king refuses, mocks him for his lack of generosity and his timorous nature. (It is true that Ortnit promised his mother that he would not take it off, but a man should have no fear of a woman!) Finally, the dwarf grabs the ring and vanishes. He is invisible to anyone who is not wearing the ring. The result of this confrontation is to highlight Alberîch's incontestable superiority in cunning and intelligence, as well as to reveal his propensity to play. This is exhibited without any doubt when the dwarf remains invisible. He throws stones at Ortnit while saying: "What good would that breastplate be for you? Of what use to a kingdom would a fool like you be? I am going to give the armor to someone who knows how to put it to good use!" (str. 148). What emerges clearly from these words and the entire episode is that Alberîch has subjected the king to a double trial—physical and intellectual—which the gallant knight hardly passes. The man of experience has triumphed over the stripling. But what is the purpose behind this test?

Defeated—he has allowed his foe to escape—and stripped of his precious ring, Ortnit seeks to leave, but Alberîch begs him to stay and promises to give him back his ring if he listens without flinching to the revelations he is going to make about his mother. The hero accepts. Alberîch reappears and says:

> "You are my son."
>
> "My mother should be burned at the stake if she shared her bed with anyone other than my father, and if I find her in Garte, that will be the last day of her life."
>
> "You are being unreasonable," responded the little man in anger, "having me for your father is an honor! You do not know your good fortune and happiness. Thanks to my teachings, you shall own lands and castles. When I slept with your mother, it was on a beautiful green May day. She wept hot tears when I violently assaulted her. You should not be upset with her, she did not consent" (str. 167–68).

This rape, which some believe to be the transcription of the belief in incubi, is less scandalous than it might appear at first glance. Alberîch performed an act of the Third Function by engendering a male heir who would ascend to the throne of Lombardy. The royal couple was childless, the lineage was threatened with extinction, and the kingdom risked falling into chaos, but thanks to Alberîch, a veritable guardian spirit, things remained on their normal course.[8] This detail of the story allows us to see that the "little man" is not a simple dwarf. Alberîch is the sole character that acts in this way. If he was a true dwarf, such behavior would necessarily appear in other

medieval stories, which is not the case. He is called a “dwarf” because this noun is the one used by the authors of this period to designate all the denizens of the lower mythology. We shall speak more about this later.

The encounter between Ortnit and Alberîch is built on a popular theme, that of a battle between a father and his son, but the objective is different: Ortnit finds the assistant he needs to succeed in his quest. However, this kinship sheds light on a good many details as well. Alberîch was waiting for his son beneath the linden tree, knowing full well that the ring—performing the function here of the enchanted animal guiding the knight toward the adventure—would lead his child to come to him. It is also probably not too presumptuous to assume that the famous dream that inspired Ortnit to set off on adventure was sent to him by the dwarf.

The way the hero uses the ring establishes a relationship between Alberîch and the sun, a relationship that is also suggested earlier by the beauty of this figure, which is almost identical to the description of Aubéron being “as handsome as the sun” in the *Roman d’Aubéron*.

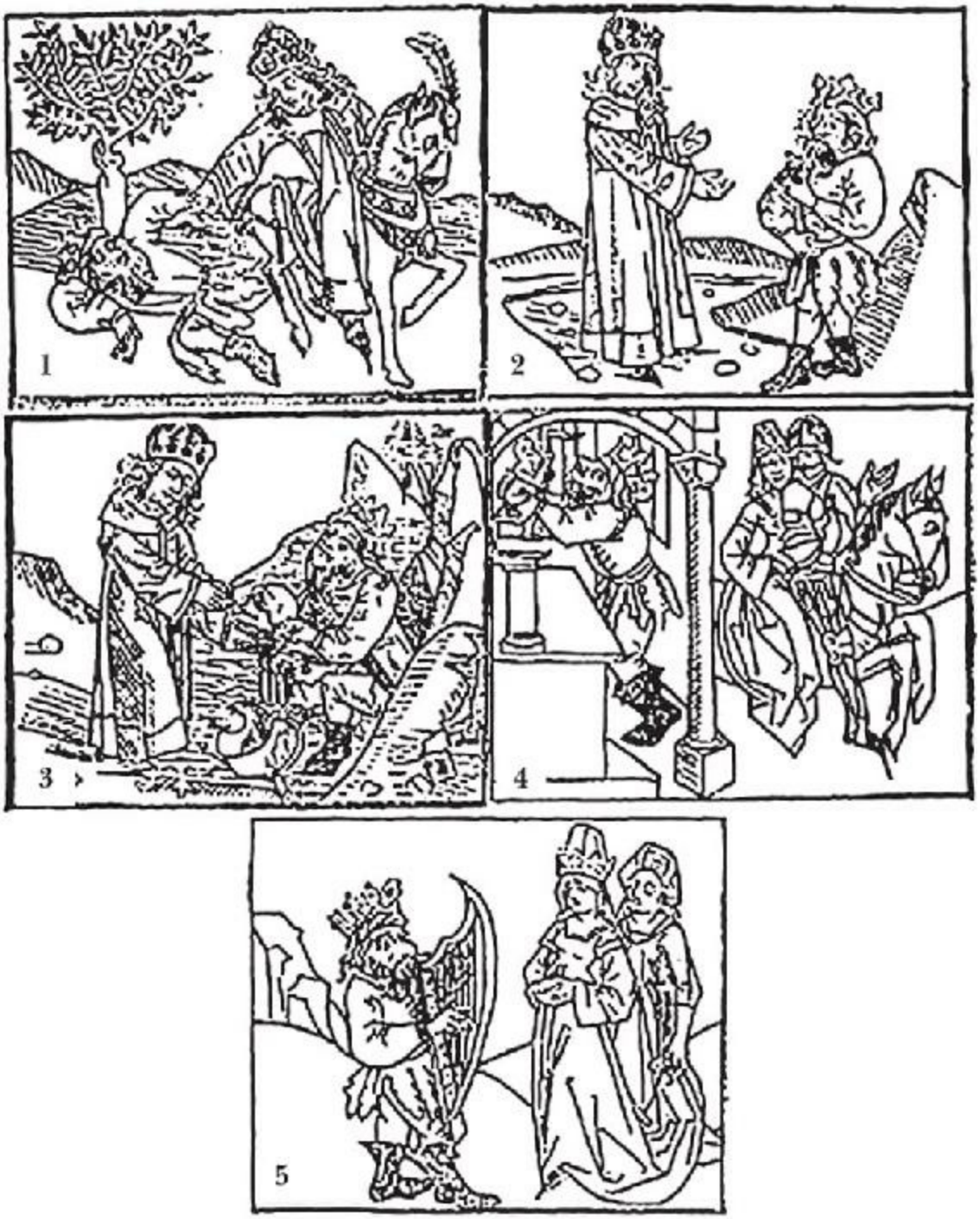
Alberîch accompanies Ortnit to the Middle East and fully reveals another trait of his character: he plays all kinds of tricks on the pagans of the Sultan. He enters Muntabur invisibly and lets Machorel know that he should give his daughter’s hand in marriage to the sovereign who has come seeking her. He slaps the Sultan when he refuses to accede to his demand, breaks the idols, steals the weapons of his enemies and casts them into the moat of the fortress, spies on conversations, and in short, sows trouble and disruptions, behaving like a malicious and mischievous spirit, to the great displeasure of his adversaries, who are unable to see him. He enters the chamber of Machorel’s daughter and tells her of Ortnit’s intentions. He plays music for her, convinces her to follow him, then abducts her with her consent and brings her to his son. Once they have returned to Lombardy, Ortnit marries the beautiful maiden, who is baptized with the name Liebgart.

Throughout this quest, Alberîch plays the role of the wise counselor and valuable assistant, but he does not succeed in thwarting Machorel’s vengeance several years later. The sultan sends several dragon eggs to Lombardy. When the reptiles grow up they devastate the country, thus forcing Ortnit to venture forth to slay them. Unfortunately, he is swallowed alive by one of these monsters.

Alberîch reappears, without being named, in *Wolfdietrich*,[9] an epic written as a continuation of *Ortnit*. Wolfdietrich—in other words, “Dietrich

the Wolf," who was given this name because he was found in the company of wolves—seeks to wed Ortnit's widow Liebgart. He sets off to avenge the late king and kill the terrible pack of reptiles that has infested the land—an initiatory rite of legitimation. He follows the trail of the dragons but grows weary and dismounts from his horse to sleep beneath a tree. As soon as he is asleep, an enormous dragon approaches, and a hairy, bearded dwarf leaps out from the brush, yelling for the knight to wake up and lamenting that he is unable to awaken him. The slumber that has befallen Wolfdietrich is, like the one that was fatal to Ortnit, due to the nature of the dragon. In this dragon we find the fundamental nature of the *hypnalis,* a fabled serpent that was well known to the learned of the Middle Ages.[10]

The Alberîch of the *Ortnit* epic is quite different from the one that appears in the *Nibelungenlied.* The guardian spirit of the young king of Lombardy, his beauty and solar nature make him akin instead to Aubéron, as does his age (five hundred years) and the fact that the meeting with the knight takes place in a forest or in the immediate proximity of a grove. But Ortnit's father also has a feature that we do not find elsewhere: he is mischievous and loves to play a thousand tricks. Before examining this point more extensively, however, let us complete our study of the legends of Alberîch.



Scenes from the Life of Alberîch: (1) The meeting with King Ortnit. (2) Laberich steals the ring. (3) He offers armor to the king. (4) He destroys the idols. (5) He charms the daughter of Machorel.

ÁLFRIKR

In the *Þiðreks saga af Bern,*[11] the dwarf Álfrikr, whose name corresponds exactly to Alberîch, plays an important role in the legend of the fabled sword Nagelringr. This Norwegian saga is a compilation of several German traditions. While pursuing a stag in the forest, Thidrekr spies a dwarf that takes flight upon seeing him. He captures the dwarf, who turns out to be Álfrikr, "the famous thief and most industrious of all the dwarfs." Álfrikr responds:

> Milord, if you spare my life and restore my freedom, I will have to lead you to a place where there is as much silver, gold, and jewels of all kinds as your father has furniture. Two persons are owners of this treasure, a woman named Hildr ["Battle"] and her husband named Grimr ["Mask"]. His strength is enormous, it is that of twelve men, but his wife is even stronger. Both are ferocious and perfidious. Grimr also owns a sword, Nagelringr, the best of all swords. I forged this blade with my own hands.

Thidrekr accepts the offer. Álfrikr goes to the home of this giant couple and steals the sword. He then gives it to the hero, who has no trouble slaying the two monsters with it (implicit in this is that Grimr and Hildr can only be killed by means of the sword).

It is thanks to the Middle High German *Eckenlied*, the tale of a giant who has set off to confront Theodoric of Bern to please three fairies, that we are able to complete this legend. The sword was forged by the dwarfs of the Goukelsachs, a hollow mountain that stands in the Dral, a river flowing near Troy (*sic*), which was then stolen by the king Ruodlieb, who gave it to his son Herbort, who used it to bring down a giant.[12]

These meager clues nevertheless allow us to see that this story is related to the *Ruodlieb,* which we discussed earlier. They also tend to suggest that a name like "Alberîch" has been attached since ancient times to a group of legends in which a wondrous sword or treasure play a major role. It is obvious that Álfrikr has no connection with the two Alberîchs we have already encountered, or with Aubéron. The only possible link is of a typological sort and would relate to the forge and the possession of objects crafted by dwarfs. Furthermore, Álfrikr is a master thief, which is to say he is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the pure Aubéron, the mischievous Alberîch of *Ortnit*, and the ferocious Alberîch of the *Nibelungenlied.* Therefore, he must correspond to a different type, to another family of fantasy creatures.

ALBERIC

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Carl Voretzsch created a surprise when he discovered references to an Alberic dubbed the Enchanter (*incarminator*). Voretzsch believed that what he had found in this personage was the archetype of Aubéron, and in his enthusiasm he has convinced more than one student this was the case.[13] So here are the facts.

In his *Annales historiae illustrium principum Hannonie* (Annals of the Illustrious Princes of Hanover), Jacques de Guyse (fifteenth century) collected a portion of the now lost work of Hugos of Toul (died 1157),[14] mainly a fragment in which appeared a figure named Alberic who was said to have lived during the Merovingian Age and may have fought Meroveus (Merovech). His eldest son allegedly married the daughter of the emperor of Constantinople.

This Alberic would have captured the attention of his contemporaries by his active paganism, displayed in his building of temples to Mercury and Minerva. He is said to have constructed various castles in the Vosges, and cities like Strasbourg, Toul, Epinal, and Plombières. According to Hugos of Toul, he would have been the son of Clodion, king of the Franks and father of Meroveus. Upon his death, he was buried in the land of the Nerviens (Belgium), in a place that first bore the name of *Ara Alberici,* which was later known as *Coma* or *Huppa Alberici*, "Hair" or "Crest of Alberic."

It is obvious that Hugos of Toul, if it is true that Jacques de Guyse really borrowed the subject matter of his story from him, sought to anchor the figure in reality, and for this purpose he used the existence of a location named La Houppe d'Albertmont. However, this place name actually corresponds to *Albertici mons* and not to a hypothetical *Alberici mons,* which indicates that what we are dealing with here is the ad-hoc formation of an etiological-type legend.[15] There is one particular point of interest to us in this story: Alberic was buried in a small grove at the top of a hill, and the ancient French word *houppe* means "grove, copse." The primary "mythical" characteristic of this individual would thereby be his relationship with the forest. But this Alberic is not a dwarf, and the name he bears was widespread among humans. As for the era of his hypothetical life, this was a time that the men of the twelfth century already regarded as one of legend and fable.

THE RELATIVES OF AUBÉRON

From the French *Bataille Loquifer*

In the *Bataille Loquifer*, a romance written by Graindor de Brie during the last third of the thirteenth century, a certain Picolet appears who is presented as a brother of Aubéron.[1] His fantastical nature is fully on display, although his role is limited to performing the traditional duties of a messenger. On the death of Aubéron, Picolet ascends the throne of Montnuble. Since this text is earlier than *Huon de Bordeaux*, it will be helpful to examine it carefully, as among other things it raises the problem of the relationship between Aubéron, the Alberîch of *Ortnit*, and the sprites or imps. Furthermore, we should remember that one of Aubéron's vassals was Malabron, a pixie, thanks to whom Huon was able to cross the Red Sea.

PICOLET, GRINGALET, AND MALABRON

Picolet is a sprite with the powers of an enchanter. He swims and runs quite swiftly, behaves like a robber—which brings Álfrikr to mind—and as a kidnapper of young children. It is almost by chance that we learn he is small, because his size goes unnoticed everywhere. As for his relationship with the element of water, it is vague and we have to turn to the *Folie Tristan de Berne* (the Berne version of *The Madness of Tristan*) to learn that he is the son of a whale (l. 160) no less! Otherwise, some strange actions are performed by this character: when Picolet arrives in a boat before Porpaillard, he does not use a rowboat to reach dry land; he jumps into the water and swims to shore. His performances as a swimmer are limited to this and to the abduction of Rainouart's daughter, Maillefer.

Picolet is ugly, hairy, dark-complected like a devil, and shaggy. He possesses three eyes, one of which is in the back of his head. These astonishing features—which contradict his nature as guardian spirit of Guillaume and Bertrand when they present themselves to Desramé, the pagan emir—are taken from the morphology of giants, which suggests that they are

not authentic. A comparison of Picolet and Malabron is also revealing in this regard. Out of his taste for the marvelous, Graindor de Brie gave his sprite a morphology that is evidence, in fact, of his paganism and supernatural nature.[2]

Picolet is extremely agile, and he can break through all obstacles, scale all walls, and deceive his adversaries thanks to his magic powers, which cannot help but bring to mind the charms (*praestigia*) of Aubéron, such as the river (see here) and so forth.

The major interest of this figure specifically lies in the fact that he is the brother of Aubéron, which, we should note, brings Aubéron close to the world of water. Furthermore, Picolet seems capable of unleashing a tempest like Aubéron, except in *Huon de Bordeaux*, the little king of Faery must strike his horn with his finger to unleash the elements. One final detail deserves to be singled out because it establishes a connection with the Alberîch of the *Nibelungenlied:* it is said in the *Bataille Loquifer* that Aubéron lives in Montnuble. It just so happens that this place-name can be translated as "Cloudy Mount" or "Dark Mount," because *nuble* corresponds exactly to the old German word *nibel* that we see in the name *Nibelungen.*

We are therefore dealing with a relatively consistent theme in which water and mist play an essential role. Graindor de Brie brings another sprite into the story, named Gringalet,[3] who is described as the father of Chapalu, a monster with the head of a cat and the body of a horse. This is none other than the *Cath Paluc* (Paluc's cat) of Celtic legends. According to several texts, King Arthur confronted this beast. In *Li Romanz des Franceis* (The Romance of the French), which was written by an individual named André before 1204, Capalu would have slain Arthur; according to the Vulgate *Livre d'Artus,* Capalu had been fishing in the Lake of Geneva and Arthur slew it on a mountain known today as the Cat's Tooth.[4] All of this reinforces the links between the waters and the sprites.

In *Huon de Bordeaux,* Malabron is an odd individual. He resembles a *nuiton* (sprite), and swims faster than a salmon. When he approaches Huon, he takes off the skin that covers him (this represents the rationalized view of a metamorphosis that was not understood) and appears as the handsomest man imaginable. This detail strengthens my conviction that the hideous appearance of Picolet is a later motif that has been added on. The ability to transform into a fish that Malabron possesses, like Andvari in the *Reginsmál*, is adulterated by the author of *Huon de Bordeaux* who, as a good Christian,

obviously feels that there are some limits that are not to be crossed in the fantasy. So he explains in his very Christian way that Malabron was punished to be a sea sprite for thirty years because he performed Aubéron's orders poorly.

If we examine the mythical characteristics of Malabron, Picolet, and Gringalet, we see that we are dealing with aquatic spirits who can take the form of animals or humans. The form of a fish is certainly not exclusive, since the son of Gringalet, Chapalu, has the form of a horse. It so happens that the horse is the form most frequently taken by water spirits. The details and gestures that relate to another Malabron will confirm my deductions.

THE MALABRON OF THE ROMANCE OF *GAUFREY*

In the thirteenth-century romance *Gaufrey* there appears a certain Malabron who is designated by the labels *follet* and *luiton* ["sprite, pixie, imp"]. Since he occupies a central place in several episodes, we are very well informed about him. I can therefore provide a brief summary of the relevant passages.

Robastre has made himself master of Castle Perilous, but his squire Aleaume is dead. He finds a casket and lays the dead body to rest in it, lights candles that he places around the coffin, and begins keeping a death vigil, but falls asleep. A spirit enters the hall. It is Malabron, the *luiton*, who wishes to test the courage of his son Robastre—a circumstance that is greatly reminiscent of Ortnit, as it is not especially common for the heroes to have dwarfs or sprites for fathers. Malabron extinguishes the candles, stands the coffin upright, and begins yelling. Robastre wakes up, sees the casket standing upright, and goes to it. He grabs it to lay it back down, but it resists. Malabron is holding it in its position. Furthermore, the sprite is in the coffin where, with the arms of the dead man he makes move, he embraces Robastre, who eventually manages to lay the casket back down and relight the candles. The hero therefore emerges victorious from this first trial in which his father demonstrates a macabre form of mischievousness.

Then Malabron transforms—let me underscore this point—into a black horse with eyes that glow like embers. When Robastre tries to mount it, the animal transforms into a bull. "What could this be?" the hero asks himself. "It is probably some kind of pixie seeking to make sport of me. He should spare me though, for I have heard said many times to the gallant knight Garin that I

am the son of a sprite.” Robastre strikes the beast with his axe, his favorite weapon, but he loses it, and the battle continues until dawn.

Malabron then tumbles three times on the ground and becomes a handsome young man again. He informs the hero that he is his father and, seeing his surprise, adds that he is older than sixty years. “I am truly your father. I can travel across the world whenever I please, provided I do no harm to Christians: it is a magical gift I have received from God. You were born near Monglane, and your mother died on the very day of your birth… . I know your life and your deeds.” In short, Malabron knows all and reveals to Robastre his future destiny, then he gives him a gift. Every time his son finds himself in danger, he has only to make the sign of the cross three times and call out Malabron’s name. He will appear immediately and deliver him from the danger, no matter what sort. After these words, the sprite vanishes.

Robastre experiments with his gift: Malabron appears and scolds him for summoning him for no reason, but he forgives him and disappears.

After various adventures, Robastre arrives at the home of Eglantine, who offers him a ring set with a stone that provides protection against evil spirits of water and fire. She also has a galley armed so that the gallant knight can rejoin Gaufrey. A storm sinks the ship. Thanks to the magical ring, Robastre floats and calls Malabron, who arrives in the form of a fish, puts him on his back, and takes him to an island. There he assumes his human form before asking his son what was bothering him. “It is because I have lost my axe,” answers Robastre. Malabron turns back into a fish, goes in search of the weapon at the bottom of the sea, then takes Robastre to the store where some Christians are standing, Gaufrey is a prisoner of the Saracens, of Morhier and his giants. Robastre is also captured, but the giants call a halt beneath an olive tree to rest. The hero calls Malabron to his aid, and the sprite appears, wearing a cape that makes him invisible. He tells Robastre:

> “You shall pay me dearly for the words you spoke, when enduring so many pains for you I carried you on my back. Hernaut de Beaulande asked you who had carried you and you answered him that it was the devil; I do remember it all! Very well, know that I am neither devil nor wicked spirit. I am of God, from whom I hold the gift of traveling the world at my pleasure and in all forms, but without being able to cause harm to any Christian.”
>
> “That’s true,” said Robastre, “the word escaped my mouth. But however did you hear it? What hundred thousand devils told you?”

> “By the faith I owe God,” said the sprite, “I was almost the distance of an entire kingdom away from you, and yet I never stopped listening to you.”[5]

Malabron forgave him this slip of the tongue, covered his son with a panel of his wondrous cloak, and snuck him out of sight of the giants. Then, using a charm, he changed the branches of the olive tree into so many snakes that put the giants to flight. Finally, Malabron untied Robastre and vanished.

The sprite appeared one last time. During the siege of his city, Morhier made a sortie while the Christians were sleeping. Alarmed by a dream—recall the dream of Ortnit that led to his meeting Alberîch—Robastre called Malabron, who appeared and warned that the pagans were invading the camp.

It is easy to recognize the similitude of certain motifs with the adventures of Huon, but a good many features come from other sources and offer blatant resemblances to the Germanic dwarfs, such as possession of a magic cloak, knowledge of the past and future, and relations of kinship.

While Malabron is a water spirit, it should also be noted that he shows chthonic features. He meets Robastre close to Aleaume’s coffin; there he transforms into a horse, a chthonic animal and preeminent psychopomp (one that accompanies souls), and it should be recalled that his metamorphosis ended at daybreak, a time when Malabron behaved oddly; he tumbled three times across the ground.[*12]

Malabron is therefore a complex figure—an aquatic sprite and a shape-shifting creature—and he has a relationship with death that is difficult to pin down at this stage of our investigation. However, he is typologically related with the Alberîchs we encountered earlier and provided that we cease thinking in terms of literary history, he can shed light on certain aspects of them. There are borrowings, that is indeed certain, but they come more from folk beliefs than from texts. They stick out from beneath the Christian overlay. The insistence with which the authors of *Huon de Bordeaux* and *Gaufrey* revert to what they call the gifts of God, a reference that is absent from the German texts, strongly suggests that they are using this to disguise elements that reek of fire and brimstone. When Malabron states that it is not permitted for him to cause harm to Christians, we should be aware that this is a time-honored phrase in ghost stories of the dead in Purgatory who come seeking suffrages from the living so that they might finally be freed.[*13] Each of the texts in our corpus supplies a further detail to the portrait I am trying to render of the dwarfs of the Middle Ages, and this is a new one.

ZEPHYR

In the fourteenth-century romance *Perceforest*,[6] we find the sprite Zephyr, who introduces himself as a sort of demon: "*I am one of the angels that stumbled with Lucifer*," a kind of fallen angel with a fairly high rank in the hierarchy of spirits. He possesses a body and the gift of metamorphosis. We generally encounter him in the guise of an old man wearing a robe of black homespun fabric, but when sporting with humans he also assumes the shape of a donkey, a stag, or a bear, as well as that of a beautiful young girl who, once embraced, turns into a horrible old crone. He also has the power to transport himself wherever he wishes to be. He is malicious, teasing, affectionate, and cheerful, and the tricks he plays are not wickedly intended. Zephyr never loses sight of his friends' interests. He helps them, transports them, frees them, and is generous with his offers of excellent advice. Two words characterize his nature: transformation and pranks.

To discover the origin of this prankish sprite whose name perhaps conceals a reality that was not comprehensible in the fourteenth century (recall the situation with the name Andvari), we must look to literature in the Latin language, most notably Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia imperialia* (Imperial Diversions; written between 1211 and 1220), which is to say we should cast a glance into the realm of folk beliefs. As I will deal with such beliefs at length in the second part of this book, here I shall be brief.

Gervase devoted the eighteenth chapter of the first book to a figure called *folletus*, "follet" ["brownie, pixie, sprite" —*Trans.*], whose characteristics were described as follows: it inhabited the dwellings of peasants, no exorcism or holy water could drive it away (which clearly proves it could be nothing other than a demon!), it hid in stones and woods, and it tormented the domestic servants. Incidentally, this description represents an interesting conflation of sprites with dwarfs and satyrs.

In another passage from his *Otia imperialia*, Gervase also refers to an impish spirit called the *neptunus* or *portunus:* "It is a law of their nature that they can be useful but cannot harm. However, they do have one way of being something of a nuisance" [by playing tricks on humans].[7] By way of similar testimonies, we can clearly see that the sprites of the romances have their origin in actual folk beliefs and retain their fundamental, constituent traits, beyond all transformations into literature.

A PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION

Before embarking on the second leg of this study, it seems necessary to draw some conclusions about the dossier I have just presented. We may begin with the literary considerations.

The analysis of the works in which dwarfs named Alberîch appear reveals that these figures cannot be identified with Aubéron, contrary to what has been often claimed and despite Pierre Ruelle's arguments on behalf of these erroneous hypotheses. Ruelle concluded the discussion with these observations:

> *Ortnit* … has a figure named Alberîch play an important role. He is a dwarf endowed with supernatural powers who helps a hero perform legendary feats during a journey to the East from which he will return with his bride. In terms of their activity and character, and even their very names, Alberîch and Aubéron resemble one another. However, we cannot accept the premise that the author of *Huon* was inspired by *Ortnit*. We see too few concordances in the details of the two adventures.[1]

But contrary to what Pierre Ruelle believes, it is also not possible to assert that the author of *Ortnit* borrowed the features he gives to Alberîch from *Huon.* In fact, we need to recognize that both of these "dwarfs" come from common sources, which can only be oral traditions and folk beliefs, since no direct borrowing from a literary work has taken place. The only satisfactory explanation for the undeniable affinity of the figures that we have presented here would be the presence of similar individuals that have an existence from which the literature has drawn.

Aubéron and Alberîch present a complete and isolated type of "dwarf" in the medieval literatures, and they appear at a time when the predominant dwarf type in the Germanic regions was the dwarf knight (of which Laurin is the best example), while in France the predominant types were the dwarf servant or the wily dwarf. Our two figures therefore go against the grain of

the literary tendencies of the time, but they are too thorough and complete to not be older in origin. When Alberîch appears in the *Nibelungenlied* he already has a long history, and the same must be true of Aubéron, who did not just spring up out of nowhere in the thirteenth century. The very fact that both these figures show traces of contamination speaks in favor of their antiquity. In short, everything about them reflects folkloric traditions that we know through the folktales.

The reader will certainly have noticed that I have neither tried to define the term "dwarf" nor have I attempted to identify its semantic field. Instead I have employed the word as the writers of the Middle Ages did, and this was deliberate on my part: the discrepancy between the term and the creatures it designates thus becomes all the more striking, and it allows us to sense that "dwarf" must, in fact, encompass a number of different realities.

I have been able to determine that the figure of the sprites, who are also composite in nature, has influenced that of the "dwarfs." I have isolated several key elements associated with the sprites, the most important of which is the aquatic element—an element that is very likely to be one of the keys to the problem posed by the nature of "dwarfs," as we find it in the Welsh *afanc*, as well as in the sprites in the romances, in Aubéron, and in the legend of Siegfried.

Another theme that has been illuminated is the metamorphosis characteristic of Andvari, and likewise of Malabron in *Gaufrey* and of Zephyr. Such metamorphosis is therefore characteristic of a creature called a "dwarf" in the Germanic domain and a "sprite" in the world of the romances.

One character trait of our little personages deserves attention: Aubéron, the Alberîch of *Ortnit,* and Malabron (*Gaufrey*) all act like guardian spirits, and in two of these cases (one from a Middle High German poem, the other an Old French chanson de geste) this behavior is justified by bonds of blood. But Alberîch is called a "dwarf" and Malabron a "sprite."

The morphology of our figures opens up other perspectives. The insistence with which the author of *Huon de Bordeaux* speaks of the beauty of Aubéron, the almost constant comparison of this dwarf to the radiance of the sun, make the small king of Faery an angel from the Christian perspective, or a solar hero from the pagan view of the matter. It so happens that this feature is confirmed by *Ortnit:* we have noted that Alberîch appears in the guise of a very beautiful child, and that Ortnit discovers him thanks to a magical ring whose power is connected to the sun. Yet Alberîch sometimes

appears as a juvenile and sometimes as an old man. What is the feature that is truly specific to this individual? The literature does not allow us to respond to this question, so we must seek elsewhere for an answer.

Besides these revelations from the texts, we have some very vague elements that in one way or another strongly suggest the “dwarfs” maintain a relationship with death and the Otherworld, understood here as the realm of the dead and not as the kingdom of the fairies. There is the habitat and the name of the Nibelungs, which is so reminiscent of the World of Mist (*Niflheimr*) of Norse mythology, and of the cloudy mountain where Picolet resides. And while the French sprite corresponds very closely to the German “dwarf,” there is still the odd behavior of Robastre’s father.

In short, we can surmise that the literary dwarf possesses another dimension than the reductive one supplied by the poets and writers—a dimension deeper than a mere stereotype, a piece of scenery for the adventure, an exotic element, a simple wonder, and an amusing, magical being. We have seen how literature has exploited this creature, but just what was it exploiting? To find out, we shall now turn to the worlds of mythology and folk beliefs.

PART TWO

MYTHOLOGIES AND BELIEFS

THE DWARFS

Their Origin, Size, Names, Skills, and the Beliefs Surrounding Them

Almost all the various literatures of the medieval West maintain their silence about the origin of the dwarfs. They proffer their existence as an obvious fact, without seeking to know how they came into being. We have two means at our disposal that will allow us to gain a better understanding of them: language and mythological texts.

WHAT IS A DWARF?

Dwarfs do not inherently arise from the romance traditions, which are essentially familiar with sprites, so it is difficult to define these creatures by means of the romance terminology. The French term for "dwarf," *nain,* is borrowed from the Latin *nanus,* which in turn comes from the Greek *nânos.* As for *pumilio,* which turns up here and there in the Latin-based literature, it is derived from *pygmaioi,* and in classical antiquity it was used to designate small-sized human beings and animals alike. Only the word "*lutin*"[*14] is analyzable. Therefore, for the romance world, we must start from this term, which in the texts I cited in part one corresponds to the "dwarf"; in other words, Middle High German *zwerc.* And in the Germanic domain, it is necessary to study *zwerc, if we wish to learn what these beings are.*

As I shall devote several pages later to the *lutin,* I shall restrict myself to recalling for the reader what others have already discovered.[1] *Lutin,* which in Old French is *nuiton/luiton,* is a generic term derived from *Neptunus. Neptunus* has given us *neton,* then *nuiton* (influenced by *nuit,* "night," because these creatures are commonly believed to manifest after dusk), and then *luiton/luton* (influenced by *luiter,* an old form of *lutter,* "fight, struggle"), and finally *lutin.* The *lutin* or sprite is therefore an avatar of the god Neptune, reduced to the rank of a simple water demon, which is

confirmed by a seventh-century sermon attributed to the Pseudo-Eligius.[2] This helps to shed some light on the actions of a Malabron or a Picolet.

Throughout the Germanic-speaking region, the dwarf is designated by words such as Middle High German *zwerc*, Old Norse *dvergr*, and Old English *dweorg*, but the poets, writers, and clerics systematically applied this term to all the denizens of the lower mythology. "Dwarf" becomes an umbrella term to designate what was originally a very diverse array of individuals, but by systematically examining the medieval German lexicon, for example, and especially that of the glosses written on the margins or between the lines of Latin books, we can name these creatures. *Zwerc* translates "faun," "satyr," "silenus" and "hairy one" (*pilosus*).[3] It so happens that these rustic spirits from classical antiquity were reputed to be small in size, which compels us to ask a basic question: was the creature called a dwarf/*zwerc* or a *homunculus*, or did it become one through contamination with these Roman land spirits? This question, which may come as a surprise today, rests upon a simple observation: the German literature of the Middle Ages repeatedly employs expressions like "the little dwarf" and "the miniscule dwarf" (*daz kleine twerc*), as well as diminutive forms (*getwergelîn*) and often a diminutive accompanied by the adjective "little" (*daz kleine getwergelîn*)![4] What could the reason be for such usage?

In my opinion, these sorts of expressions indicate that *zwerc* did not convey any idea of height or size; otherwise they would quite simply be pleonastic—and the frequency with which they were employed strongly suggests that the writers felt the need to convince their listeners or readers that the dwarf was little, as a result of which this idea has become firmly established up to the present day. It is therefore essential that we trace the etymology of *zwerc* if we want to learn what is what. After all, "sprite" did not originally convey an idea of smallness either.

Several Proto-Indo-European roots have been proposed for *zwerc: *dhuer-*, "deceive, harm," and **dheugh-*, which carries a similar meaning with an added sense of cunning or guile.[5] In both cases, reliance has been placed on the Old English *dweorg*, which means "dwarf" and "cramp" (based on a belief that said dwarfs were the originators of illnesses and fainting spells). Unfortunately, the charms that have been preserved from before the tenth century say the same thing about elves and witches, so the reference is therefore not pertinent.

Within the Germanic sphere, the continental German term *zwerc* is

linguistically problematic because a correspondence between the *z*that it shows and the *d*that appears in the other languages (such as Old English *dweorg* and Old Norse *dvergr*) is an unexpected development. The form *zwerc* therefore seems to have undergone some vacillation due to causes other than phonological evolution (which is a fairly frequent phenomenon among terms that arise out of beliefs and mythologies). This vacillation was most likely the result of a crossing with the adjective *querg/querch ~ zwerch,* which means "askew, aslant."

More recent studies have proposed the root **dhwergho-*, but they are based on the Germanic forms other than the continental German. Christian Bartholomae, for example, suggests comparing *zwerc* with the Avestan hapax *drva*, but this term, which appears in a context of names for the disabled (thus allowing for a meaning of "dwarf"), remains obscure and any translation can only be conjecture. Furthermore, Bartholomae's etymology does not lend support to the Germanic forms, as it is based on them.

The etymology of Julius Pokorny, using **dhuergh* as a doublet of **dhreugh, "to deceive," is the semantic interpretation of the preceding reconstruction. Philologically acceptable, as it only presumes a common type of metathesis (like, for example,* *tarwo ~ *tawro, "bull"), it merely reflects the traditional comparison between the Indo-Iranian roots **dhraugh-*, "to deceive," and **dhwar-*, "to bend." If we give another semantic interpretation of Pokorny's etymology, in all likelihood we will be able to penetrate the secret of the term that concerns us. The meaning of "deceiving" could have developed out of "bending, to be bent" (the Indo-Iranian root **dhwar-*), as an Indo-European metaphor identified straightness with truth and curvature with lies, a notion that survives today in such expressions as "the right way" or a "twisted individual." In the *Vedas* and the *Avesta*, the path of truth is synonymous with the "right road."

We can be certain that the dwarf was originally a "twisted individual," predisposed to being a deceiver by reason of the solidarity between an individual's physical appearance and his moral character. The people of the Middle Ages held on to such opinions for a long time: everyone who was poorly built or ugly was reputedly malevolent and wicked, a belief the Church countered by relying on the words from the Song of Solomon (1:5): "Dark am I, but lovely." My interpretation is subject to the connection of the two roots **dhwer(gh)*and **dhreuwgh*-made by Manfred Mayrhofer in his etymological dictionary of Sanskrit under *dhvarati*, "night, damage."

A large number of arguments have been made in support of this lesson from etymology—at least in the German-speaking regions—that tells us malice and cunning are fundamental traits of certain dwarfs. You be the judge: in *Orendel,* the dwarf Alban lures the beautiful Bride into a chamber and tries to rape her;[6] Laurin, who was portrayed earlier in this book, is an abductor and cheat despite his courtly veneer;[7] in *Wolfdietrich*, the dwarf Billunc carries off Lady Liebgart.[8]

We find the same characteristics in the Scandinavian countries, especially in the myth of Kvasir that Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241) recounts in his *Skáldskaparmál* (Treatise on the Poetic Art).[9] Kvasir is slain by the dwarfs Fjalarr and Galarr, who also dispatched the giant Gillingr and his wife. In the *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* (Saga of Hervör and Heidrek), the dwarfs Dvalinn and Durinn get their revenge on King Svafrlami as follows: they forge a cursed sword for the king; every time it is drawn from the scabbard it cannot be put back in it until it has slain a man. Finally Svafrlami is brought down, slain by his own sword.[10] When Völundr (Wayland) the mythic smith, learns the art of the forge from the dwarfs that dwell in the mountain of Ballova, his hosts decide to kill him on the strength of a very odd agreement they have concluded with the hero's father, the giant Vadi: if he does not return to retrieve his son by a certain date, they will have the right to cut off his head. On the day that was fixed for the giant's return, the dwarfs leave the mountain to see if Vadi comes, but he has been buried by a landslide. Thinking that Vadi has broken their agreement, they rush upon Völundr, who cuts them down with a sword that his father had hidden (a clear indication that he did not trust dwarfs).[11] In northern Europe these creatures are regarded as malignant.

In France, the dwarfs from the romances of the Round Table are often wicked for no good reason,[12] but the romance dwarf is not a virgin personage but the product of an amalgamation of Celtic and Germanic traditions. Is it a coincidence that the harmful dwarf type is well represented in both these literatures?

What emerges from the above considerations is that we should clearly distinguish in every analysis between what is strictly speaking a dwarf (the *zwerc/dweorg/dvergr*) and the other individuals that have been saddled with this name. A true dwarf should be a negative personage, which can be a difficult point to bring out when it has been transformed literarily. Very well

then, we have a harmful, “twisted” figure! But is it little?

THE SIZE OF DWARFS

In the folk traditions collected from the eighteenth century, a characteristic of the creatures commonly called “spirits” (a term of disconcerting polysemy) is their ability to not be restricted to having one size, a bit like the giant in *Puss in Boots* who ends up changing into a mouse. Spirits can change size at will, depending on their mood and their intentions. Furthermore, a student of the world of beliefs will note that historical evolution, the “wear and tear” of the centuries, impresses on certain fantasy beings features that do not originally belong to them. One example: today, trolls are dwarfs,[13] whereas before the year 1000 they were terrible giants. While dwarfs clearly enjoy an ancient history, they have been, like all the beings of lower mythology, subject to the hazards of time and have necessarily been exposed to contamination, which would have brought about alterations in their morphology. We shall closely examine the dwarf/giant pair in order to elucidate the problem of the size of dwarfs.

Germanic mythology contains three major kinds of giants: the *thurs*, the *jötunn*, and the *risi* (cf. German *Riese*). There is something odd in the fact that the etymologies of these three descriptive names are obscure.[14] With regard to *thurs*, researchers have variously suggested that it derives from the name of a Pre-Indo-European megalithic people, a verb meaning “to rush with great noise,” or an adjective implying notions of physical strength. Concerning *jötunn*, researchers are in agreement that there is a connection to the verb *eta*, “to eat,” which means that this kind of giant would be an ogre. *Risi* could have the meaning of “demon inhabiting the mountain,” or “large as a mountain,” but these are hypothetical. Of these three terms, only one could therefore imply an idea of size, which is nevertheless quite curious.

Let’s move our investigation ahead further with the help of our strongest evidence: the texts of Norse mythology.

Sometimes, dwarfs and giants bear the same name: this is the case with Durnir, Fjalarr, and Galarr, whom we know as dwarfs but whose names are cited in a list (Old Norse *þula*) of giants. So that we do not get bogged down in a contradiction where there isn’t one, we should note that there are dwarfs whose offspring are giants—Odin slew the giant Sökkmímir, son of the dwarf

Miðviðnir—which cannot help but bring to mind what Chrétien de Troyes said about Bilis and his brother.[15] There are also giants who have had human children. We have a splendid example of this with Wayland the Smith, whose father is the giant Vadi. We also find giants that are small in size; Reginn, for example, the brother of Fáfnir, whom we spoke about in connection with the legend of Siegfried, and about whom the *Reginsmál* says: “He had the size of a dwarf.” There is also Loki, the “little fellow” (see here), who sleeps with the giantess Angrboða. How are we to explain what seem to us like contradictions and aberrations due to our being mired in received ideas and a Cartesian mind-set?

In light of the facts, we have to accept that the terms we translated as “dwarf” or “giant” designate families, races of beings cohabitating in the same mythology and even having relations with each other. They do not live each in their own corner, in splendid isolation; they mix with each other—I will provide illustrations of this later—and with humans, and to do so they change size.

A passage from *The Saga of Hadingus*, which Saxo Grammaticus inserted in his *Gesta Danorum* (circa 1200), seems extremely revealing on this point.[16] The giantess Harthgrepa tells Hadingus: “let a proper warmth inspire you, tie me with the bond of passion. For I first gave you the milk of my breast, tended you as a baby boy, performing all a mother’s duties.” Her protégé objects that their difference in size opposes this, and he receives the following reply: “Distend, contract, swell out, shrink, grow apace; immediate transformations gives me twin conditions, separate lives; I become huge to fright the fierce, but small to lie with men.”[17]

The ability is rationally explained here, but I think that it belongs to the domain of metamorphosis, even if, in some texts, it seems to be attributed to magic powers.

For dwarfs, we should turn to the *Roman van Lancelot* in Middle Dutch. Here, we see a dwarf assume the size of a man, the knight Gauvain. Alas, this motif is not entirely free of contamination, since this growth goes hand in hand with the shrinking of Gauvain.[18] This allows us to list the motif as part of a particular form of metamorphosis, the transformation of appearance (German *Gestaltentausch*), which is clearly confirmed in the romances of the Round Table. See, for example, the story of the conception of King Arthur in the *Merlin* of Robert de Boron.[19] We also find it again in the legend of Sigurðr (Siegfried) when the hero changes bodies with Gunnar (Gunther),

who has been unsuccessful in crossing the wall of fire surrounding the castle where the valkyrie Brynhildr lies sleeping.[20]

What this short presentation has shown is that, in the beliefs and the mythology, size is not a pertinent criterion in the identification of dwarfs, quite simply because we are moving in a world of fluid boundaries where transformation plays a major role. We have seen several very clear, albeit literary, examples of this in the first part of the book.

THE BIRTH OF THE DWARFS

Before looking at how dwarfs were born, I need to make one observation about our sources. I am starting essentially from the great Norse mythological texts, the *Poetic Edda* and the *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson, especially the *Gylfaginning* (Deluding of Gylfi) and the *Skáldskaparmál*, which form, respectively, the first and second book of the great Icelandic poet's scholarly work.[21] It should be known, however, that the northern mythology is not free from outside influences, and its elements are muddled and even at times contradictory, for they are the result of a slow process of elaboration. They represent the organization of mythical elements in the form of stories constructed from preexisting components that belonged to a variety of spheres, including those of religion, superstition, and civilization. The mythology therefore transcribes a *Weltanschauung*, a perception of the world, a mentality, but it also petrifies it, which, as time passes, leads to a discrepancy between its message and reality. The Eddic poems form a synthesis of a past for which other vestiges survive, such as in the form of archaeological discoveries and place-names—a past that is not necessarily in agreement with actuality. This should be acknowledged before we cast ourselves into the densely overgrown realm of Germanic mythology.

After they slew Ymir, the primordial giant, the gods created the world from the parts of his body:

> *From Ymir's flesh the earth was shaped,*
> *And the mountains from his bones;*
> *the sky, from the skull of the frost-cold giant,*
> *and the sea from his blood.*[22]

Once this was done, they gathered together and deliberated:

> *Then all the Powers went to the thrones of fate,*

the sacrosanct gods, and considered this:
who should form the lord of the dwarfs
out of Brimir's blood and from Bláinn's limbs?

Bláinn and Brimir are two other names of Ymir. If we stay with the poem *Völuspá* (The Sibyl's Prophecy), the dwarfs are already there. In fact there are only two, and they are going to create a race in their image.

Then Módsognir
became the greatest of all the dwarfs, and Durinn another.
Many manlike figures they made,
dwarfs from the earth, as Durinn recounted.[23]

So there were Módsognir and Durinn, who came from who-knows-where, but the *Gylfaginning* (chap. 8) shows they were not alone:

> The gods took the skull of Ymir and from it made the sky, which they placed above the earth on four corners, and at each corner they placed a dwarf. They were named Austri (East), Vestri (West), Norðri (North), and Suðri (South).

This vision of things is clearly quite ancient as *dvergr* ("dwarf ") is also the name of one of the roof beams in the houses of the ancient Scandinavians.

So at least four dwarfs were present at the dawn of the world, or perhaps even six if we include Durinn and Módsognir. Snorri explains their birth in the following way:

> The dwarfs were first formed in the body of Ymir and come to life. During this time, they were worms, but due to a decision of the gods, they received reason and a human shape. They dwell in the ground and the stones.[24]

We should note, incidentally, that none of these texts makes any allusion to the size of the dwarfs.

According to Snorri, dwarfs would have therefore been born through a kind of spontaneous generation from the decomposition of the corpse of the primordial giant, which implies that some time elapsed between the moment when the gods slew the giant and the moment they undertook the creation of the world. This is an important point because it can explain to a certain extent why dwarfs and giants have points in common: they are close relatives. We should also note that the extraordinary genesis of the dwarfs brings to mind a similar belief that is prominent in classical antiquity: Virgil calls bees "winged offshoots of a dead ox" (*Georgics* IV, 299ff.), and our ancestors long believed in the birth of living creatures from the putrefaction of a corpse.

Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) cites the birth of snakes as taking place in similar conditions.[25] In short, what emerges in all this is that dwarfs were originally larvae that the gods made into anthropomorphic creatures endowed with intelligence. Therefore, from the very beginning, dwarfs have possessed a telluric nature and maintain an obvious relationship with the dead.

We have another story about the genesis of the dwarfs, thanks to an anonymous fifteenth-century author from the continental German-speaking lands. In a unique "herogony," he informs us of the following:

> It should also be known why God first created the minuscule dwarfs, then the enormous giants, and finally the heroes.
>
> He started by creating the minuscule dwarfs because the land and mountains were wild and lay fallow, because there was a large quantity of silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls hidden in the mountains. For this reason, God gave the dwarfs great science and wisdom, so that they could discern between good and evil, and knew why all these things were good.
>
> They also knew what gems could be good for… . God gave science and wisdom to the dwarfs so that they might be kings and lords just as good as the valiant knights. He gave them great wealth.

Contrary to what the *Edda* states and what Biblical traditions tell us, the giants were therefore not the first inhabitants of the earth, and this point deserves note because our author was a good Christian. What he writes also reveals that he was following a tradition that has otherwise not come down to us. Let's now read the following part of this text (one to which little attention has been paid until now on the grounds that it was of late provenance!):

> Why did God create the giants? It was so they could battle the great dragons to ensure greater safety for the dwarfs and for the earth to be cultivated. After several years, the giants began treating the dwarfs badly, and became wicked and treacherous. Then God created the vigorous heroes, an intermediary people between the other two. It should be known that the heroes were loyal and good-natured for a long time. It was therefore incumbent upon them to help the dwarfs fight against the treacherous giants, the wild animals, and the reptiles.[26]

It is curious that we can find the Indo-European trifunctional schema here. The dwarfs—miners and peasants—are engaged in activities of the

Third Function: they exploit the wealth above and below the ground. It so happens that this function is, with some variations, what has been best retained of their history.

The giants embody the Second Function, war, and heroes embody the First Function, namely sovereignty and religion (this function is dual), which appears here from the angle of maintaining and defending the divine order.

If we compare this German text to the *Gesta Danorum* in which Saxo Grammaticus offers his cosmogonic vision, we will detect a resemblance on the functional plane, but not on the individual plane. Saxo says that the first inhabitants of the earth were the giants; the second inhabitants, who were inferior physically but prevailed over the giants due to their quickness of mind, possessed the art of divination and, thanks to their magic, were able to pass themselves off as gods. Men were born from the crossbreeding of these two races and received the false label of gods.[27] Saxo is euhemerizing the mythological data here in order to inscribe them within a historical perspective, and these three groups in fact cover the giants and the gods of the Aesir and the Vanir, but it will be noted that the dwarfs are absent from this picture.

One final German text, likely dating from the thirteenth century and bearing the title *Magnificat,* testifies to the recuperation of the dwarfs within a Christian cosmogony:

> God divided up the devils and spread them throughout the entire world: in the water and mountains live nixies and dwarfs; in the forests and the marshes God has placed others, elves, thurses [giants], and wights, which are of no worth.[28]

It is hard to deliver so much information in so few words, and two points here are quite interesting: first there is the mention of the thurses, giants that are practically unknown outside of Norse literature although they are part of the entire Germanic heritage, as is shown by place-names and a few scarce clues; secondly there is the localization of the dwarfs (mountains) and their similarity to nixies.[29] This final point contradicts what Norse mythology says about the dwarfs' connections to the world of stone.

What can we take from these accounts of the birth of the dwarfs? It is evident that each of the explanations offered represents a relatively recent speculation or an a posteriori reconstruction based on traditions known to the authors—a reconstruction intended to fill a gap in the mythical cosmogony. At a certain stage of historical evolution, peoples feel the need to give shape

to their traditions so they do not become lost, and this task is incumbent on scholars, learned individuals who organize and codify the material at their disposal. In fact, they run headlong into an insurmountable barrier, that of memory, which tempts them to remedy this state of affairs by apprehending what they do not know from what they know.

THE NAMES OF THE DWARFS

The *Eddas* have handed down long lists (*þulur*) of dwarf names that provide a working foundation: in the Germanic world, names are full of meaning, reflecting the activity, character, morphology, and so forth of their bearers, so they allow us to approach the deeper nature of the creatures under study, and from a new angle, of course. The *Völuspá* provides us with sixty-eight dwarf names, and the *Gylfaginning* gives us sixty, to which we can add a handful that are scattered through other texts. Many, alas, only appear once, and we often wonder whether the skalds (the name of the Norse poets) might not have simply invented them ad hoc.[30] It is difficult, however, to know exactly what role is played by the patronyms applied to dwarfs, who are often confused with elves.

Once we have eliminated all the names that etymologically cannot be those of dwarfs (for reasons we will see in the next chapter), six large groups remain.

The first group attests to the confusion between elves and dwarfs; they are, for example, “Elf with the Magic Wand,” and “Elf of the Wind.” Names such as “Wise,” “Very Wise,” and “Of Shrewd Counsel”[31] can also belong to elves, although they apply to dwarfs.

The second group refers to the character or physical aspect of the name: “Twisted/Shrunken,” “Puffed Up,” “Hoary” or “Blind,” “Tough,” “Of Unbending Will,” “Warrior,” and “Flowing” (this last one is most likely an example of antiphrasis).[32]

In the third group we find the names of dwarfs whose names suggest an artisanal activity or refer to it directly: “Adept with His Hands,” “Miller,” “Ironmonger,” “Filer.”[33] The working of metals holds a major place here, and several dwarfs are quite simply named “Smith,” or metaphorically, for example, “He Who Sends Sparks Flying.”[34]

The fourth group describe dwarfs as harmful beings with names like

“Deceiver,” “Enemy,” “Damage Maker,” “Master Thief,” or “Mead Wolf.”[35]

Within the fifth group, dwarfs appear as magicians, and we stumble across names like “Enchanter,” “Lapp” (because magic is reputed to be the prerogative of the Finns [*Finnar*], a term which in fact referred to the Sámi), “Magician,” and “Charming” (in the magical sense of the term).[36] The Eddic poem *Hávamál* (Speech of the High One) confirms this point and says that a certain Dvalinn knew how to carve the runes.

The last group is fascinating, as it proves the collusion between the dwarfs and the deceased. The names are devoid of ambiguity: “Black One,” “Departed,” “Torpid,” “Dead One,” “Cadaver,” “He Who Enters the Tomb,” “Prepared for Burial,” “Cold One,” “Buried beneath the Cairn.”[37] If we recall that in practically all latitudes the moon is the celestial body of the dead, we can include “Moonless Night” and “New Moon” in this group.[38] Since death was regarded as a form of sleep, the name “Slumbering” also falls into this same domain. And wouldn’t “Ancestor”[39] be the most revealing name concerning beliefs associated with the dead?

Other names resist classification, and the interpretation I have given them is based on the work of previous scholars, but I have only retained the least controversial results. While the philological problems are actually quite far from being resolved, the glimpse provided above is edifying and corroborates everything that we know from other sources.

DWARFS, STONES, AND THE DEAD

Dwarfs are chthonic beings, and poets are in agreement when they inform us that sunlight petrifies them, just like the spirits and revenants with whom they have more than one point in common. They live in or under the stones; therefore in an underground world that takes the form of caverns or burial mounds.

The Danish toponymy, for example, offers proof of this. We can find three places named “Mound of the Dwarf” (*Dvaerghöj*): one on Anholt island; another in the Kattegat, on Refsnæs, the eastern tip of Zealand; and the last near Kragelund, at the southernmost point of the district of Viborg. We also have “Dwarfs’ Stone” (*Dvergasteinn*), a place-name that we find in Norway and Iceland too.[40] Furthermore, the folktales frequently assimilate the dwarfs with the spirits (*vættir*) inhabiting the mountains, and the other Germanic literatures of the Middle Ages do the same.

We know that the mountain was, in the popular beliefs of this bygone era,

regarded as a realm of the dead. The *Landnámabók* (Book of the Settlement of Iceland), *The Saga of Snorri Goði*, and *Njal's Saga* very often attest to this.[41] Furthermore, two historicized legends inform us that to follow a dwarf into the mountain or beneath/into a stone is synonymous with dying.

The oldest of these legends is that of King Sveigðir, first told by the skald Þjóðólfr of Hvinir (tenth century) and retold by Snorri Sturluson in his *Heimskringla* ("The Orb of the World," a history of the kings of Norway) when he retraced the mythic history of the Ynglings, the lineage of the first kings of Sweden:

> Sveigðir went to look for Goðheimr [Gods' Home] again. And in the eastern part of Svíþjóð [Sweden] there was a large farm called Steinn ("at the Stone"). There is a stone there as big as a large house. In the evening after sunset, when Sveigðir left the drinking to go to his sleeping chamber, he looked towards the stone and saw a dwarf sitting under it. Sveigðir and his men were very drunk, and ran towards the stone. The dwarf stood in the doorway and called to Sveigðir, telling him to go in there if he wanted to meet Óðinn [Odin]. Sveigðir ran in (*Sveigðir hlióp i steininn*), and the stone immediately closed behind him, and Sveigðir never came out.
>
> So says Þjóðólfr of Hvinir:
>
> *And the day-shy*
> *doorkeeper*
> *of Durnir's tribe*
> *tricked Sveigðir,*
> *when into the stone*
> *the spirited kinsman of Dusli*
> *ran after a dwarf,*
> *and the bright hall*
> *of Sǫkmímir's band,*
> *settled by giants,*
> *swallowed the king.*[42]

The lesson of the passage is clear, and one expression is quite eloquent: "if he wanted to meet Óðinn" (*ef hann vildi Óðin hitta*). In fact, the *Ynglinga Saga* has recounted the death of Odin, so it is therefore a matter of joining him in the otherworld. The king vanishes there but does not return, contrary to the similar legends from the Celtic world. I have come across a similar motif from the early Middle Ages in southern Germany. In the legend of

Theodoric of Verona (Dietrich von Bern), there is a text that says that at the end of his life, the Ostrogoth followed a dwarf: “Never again was he seen and none knew whatever became of him.”[43]

Another important testimony comes from England courtesy of Walter Map, a cleric born around 1140 in the county of Hereford and who died in April 1209 or 1210. In his *De nugis curialium* (Courtiers’ Trifles), written between 1182 and 1193, he recounts the story of King Herla, who became the leader of the Wild Hunt, the *Familia Herlethingi*, an ancient form of the *Mesnie Hellequin.* As this narrative is rather long, I will summarize it:[44]

> Herla met a red-headed dwarf and made a deal with him: the dwarf would attend his wedding and he would attend the dwarf’s. Herla married the daughter of the king of the Franks at which time the dwarf appeared and gave him some very costly gifts. A year later, he invited Herla to follow him to his kingdom because he was going to be wed, and the king followed. He entered a cavern, beneath an immensely high boulder—a cliff or a mountain. Once the ceremony and the festivities were open, Herla received permission to leave. The dwarf offered him horses, dogs, falcons, and a small bloodhound. In addition, the host forbade the king dismount from his horse for any reason until the bloodhound had jumped to the ground. Herla left the cavern with his people and met a shepherd whom he questioned, and who answered him: “Lord, I barely understand your language, because I am a Saxon and you are a Breton. I have never heard the name of your queen, except what has been said about her recently. This queen of the very ancient Bretons was the wife of King Herla who, according to fabulous tales, vanished in the area of this cliff with certain Pygmies, and never reappeared on Earth.” Herla was stunned because he thought he had only been gone for three days. Some of his companions set foot on the ground and instantly crumbled into dust, because the bloodhound had not jumped down from Herla’s horse. Nor has he ever done so, and since this time King Herla can be seen pursuing his mad course in the company of his men in endless wandering, without any rest or respite.

It is obvious that the Breton sovereign and his men were carried into the otherworld, which here is the realm of the dead where the dwarfs dwell. They still have bodies but are living in a timeless retreat. When they return to the human world, time reclaims its rights once contact has been established

between the earth and their bodies. They then crumble into dust as if they had been buried for several centuries.

Added to what we have just seen concerning the onomastics of dwarfs, this information confirms that, at a given time in their history, dwarfs were regarded as the dead and played the role of spirits or emissaries of the dead. Two other motifs also point in this direction.

First, we have the reputation of dwarfs as guardians of hidden treasures. Connect that to the fact that dwarfs inhabit tumuli, tombs from which archaeologists have unearthed a wealth of grave goods,[45] and we will have a plausible explanation that reinforces two clues: the most recent tombs were topped by a memorial stone, and it may have been at the foot of that stone that the people of that era saw dwarfs. The second supporting detail is that tumuli were used for group burials, which could provide a good explanation why the texts situate dwarf populations beneath the mounds. Snorri Sturluson, when listing the names of dwarfs, says this: “These came from Svarin’s mound to Joruvellir [Pebble Plains] at Aurvangar [Mud Fields] … .”[46]

Another detail that fits right into the thread of the assimilation of these creatures with the dead is the belief that dwarfs were petrified by sunlight. We should recall here a supporting detail from the myth of the Eternal Battle:[*15] in this endless combat, the dead turn into stones every evening and only come back to life with the dawn.[47] What could be the significance of this petrification if it were not symbolic of death?

And is the following not equally revealing? When the god Thor tests his knowledge against that of the dwarf Alvíss (“All-wise”), he tells him:

> “What sort of man is that, why so pale about the nostrils,
> Did you spend the night with a corpse?”[48]
>
> And after launching into a verbal joust that lasted all night, Thor won because the light that came with the rising sun petrified his opponent: “Day dawns on you now, dwarf.”[49]

DWARFS AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

Norse mythology and the Western literatures recognize the dwarf as a skilled artisan and renowned smith. These creatures have crafted the most

important objects owned by the gods: Thor's hammer (Mjöllnir), Odin's spear (Gungnir), Freyr's boat (Skiðblaðnir), and Freya's necklace (Brisingamen). In order to obtain this last object, Brisingamen, the goddess had to sleep with each of the four dwarfs that had made it. Dwarfs crafted the golden hair for Thor's wife, Sif, and they forged the ring Draupnir and a boar with gold bristles (Gullinbursti).

Each of these objects was endowed with magical properties, which strongly suggests that the dwarfs knew magic (although we should also note that smiths have always had the reputation of being part sorcerer, as Mircea Eliade has clearly shown[50]). However violently he strikes with it, Thor's hammer never wavers: he always hits his target, and it always returns to the god's hand. The hair crafted by the dwarfs grows on Sif 's head as if it were natural. Njörðr's boat can be folded up like a handkerchief, and it always has the wind in its sails once they have been unfurled. Every nine (= 3 × 3; a magic number) nights the ring Draupnir drips eight rings as heavy as it is. Odin placed this ring on his son Baldr's funeral pyre, but Hermóðr, one of the one-eyed god's other children, brought it back after he traveled down to the realm of the dead in order to obtain permission from the goddess Hel for Baldr to return to the gods. Freyr's boar can fly through the air and over water, and no matter how dark the surroundings, the glow cast by its gold bristles illuminates the area.

The dwarfs also forged Þrymgjöll, likely the iron gate sealing off the underworld and known as the Corpse Gate (*Nágrind*) or Gate of Hell (*Helgrind*): any man who lifts it off its hinges will be paralyzed. The forges of the subterranean people also produced Gleipnir, the chain used by the gods to bind the wolf Fenrir. It broke at the time of the great apocalyptic conflagration of Ragnarok—which Wagner immortalized under the erroneous but poetic name of "Twilight of the Gods" (*Götterdämmerung*)—and Fenrir swallowed the moon and the sun. It so happens that Gleipnir was crafted with a great deal of skill and magic: "It was constructed from six elements: the noise of a cat's footsteps, the beard of a woman, the roots of a mountain, the sinews of a bear, the breath of a fish, and the spittle of a bird."[51]

Dwarfs are also the creators of poetry, as are many other underworld beings in numerous mythologies. Two dwarfs, Fjalarr and Galarr, killed Kvasir, the personification of an intoxicating beverage, and by mixing his blood with honey, they created a drink capable of turning any person who drinks it into a poet or a scholar. This is why poetry is metaphorically

described in kennings as the “brew of the dwarfs” or the “drink of Billing’s sons (i.e., dwarfs).”[52]

It should not be assumed that the dwarfs reserve their services for just the gods: they also do forge-work for men, but these objects are most often malefic, as if, having nothing to fear from human beings, the dwarfs allow their true nature to gain the upper hand. They forged the sword Dáinslef, the name of which literally means “Dáinn’s legacy.” Dáinn just so happens to be a dwarf name that means “death.” The wound this sword inflicts can never be healed, and the weapon cannot be returned to its scabbard until it has killed someone. Another sword, Tyrfingr, is equally harmful. As a precaution, the king Heiðrekr took it with him to the grave because he knew the cursed sword would bring an end to his lineage, but, alas, his precaution was in vain. Using necromancy, his daughter Hervör forced him to give it back to her, having no qualms about disturbing him in his burial mound.[53]

The theme of wondrous weapons forged by dwarfs can be found in all the literatures of the Middle Ages, but more frequently so in the Germanic world. Oddly enough, it is rare that they are burdened by a curse in these stories. As a general rule, the creatures called “dwarfs” offer these weapons to knights and other valiant figures in exchange for their freedom (when they have been captured) or for a favor (when they are seeking help in escaping the clutches of the giants that enslave them, or the wrath of dragons). The fate that falls upon such a weapon often comes about because a hero stole it; in this case, the dwarfs cast their curse.

Finally, there is the gold of the dwarf Andvari, about whom we spoke earlier in regard to the legend of Siegfried (see here). This gold is the cause of a parricide and the discord between two brothers, Reginn (“a very skilful man in making things and a dwarf in height; he was wise, ferocious, and knowledgeable about magic”[54]) and Fáfnir, who takes possession of the treasure and assumes the shape of a dragon.

THE DWARFS AND THE GODS

Dwarfs occupy an important place in mythology. However, there is one astonishing fact: they have no attachment to any deity, and this point deserves our full attention.

No member of the Germanic pantheon is presented at the master of the

dwarfs, and it has never been said that they were dependent on a god. This is all the more curious since, as we shall see in the next chapter, the elves are associated with the god Freyr and the Aesir. A certain imbalance rules at the heart of this particular aspect of the mythology, which otherwise demonstrates a systematic organization (a reflection of the penchant the Germans have always had for order). It might be quite justifiable, then, to ask whether the dwarfs possibly represent a group that has been more recently added on to the mythology, some sort of supernumeraries, so to speak. But we have also seen how the dwarfs' position as craftsmen attaches them to the gods. We must therefore approach the matter from another angle and consider things in terms of functions and structures. The reader would be well advised to revisit the crucial point we are touching on here after he or she has read the analysis I will devote to the elves in chapter seven.

In terms of their activity and knowledge of magic, the dwarfs are comparable to the Vanir. These gods are associated with agricultural fertility and linked to sensual pleasure, peace, and wealth; they are also linked to a certain kind of magic, *seiðr*, which is pejoratively labeled as base. According to Régis Boyer: "All in all, clearly connected to the idea of the Vanir is a complex of representations in which water, magic, and death are inseparable."[55] It so happens that, as we have seen earlier, this same complex is also associated with the dwarfs. There is the element of water (which is prominent in the story of Andvari, the dwarf who evolved in the form of a pike), the magic (which emerges from the objects crafted by these creatures), and death (which is evident from their names and from the relationship between stones and dwarfs).

The Vanir are also associated with the mineral realm, as is attested by the legend of Gullveig, whose name means "Drunk with Gold." Before the onset of the hostilities that broke out between the two major families of the northern gods, the Vanir sent the *Æsir* the above-named Gullveig. She practiced magic, bewitched minds, and was the source of joy to wicked women. The *Æsir* pierced her with their spears and burned her three times—what Georges Dumézil calls giving her the "metallurgical treatment"[56]—without being able to kill her. "Drunk with Gold" therefore appears to be a ruse of the Vanir, who thereby sow discord among their enemies—*divide ut imperes!*—by exploiting their well-known fondness for precious metal.

Taking action this way is the preferred means by beings who are loath to employ the force of arms, perhaps because it is really not in their nature to do

so. We cannot help but make the comparison with dwarfs, who similarly use cunning and magic to defend themselves. On the functional plane, then, the relationship of the Vanir and the dwarfs is quite clear-cut, although in other areas it is very vague. Only Freyr and Freya have occasional interactions with them: the goddess to obtain her famous necklace; the god to ask them to forge an unbreakable chain with which to fetter Fenrir.

The dwarfs and the Vanir both fall under the jurisdiction of the same function—the Third Function—in Georges Dumézil's sense of the term, although each group embodies a different pole of this classification. The dwarfs represent the negative pole and the Vanir represent the positive pole. The story of "Drunk with Gold" can be viewed as a bridge between these two extremes, for it is, as far as I am aware, the only instance of a malevolent act performed by the Vanir.

Although it cannot be proved one way or the other, we can, therefore, envision the dwarfs as a functional duplication of the Vanir, with the gods proper conserving what suits their image, and the dwarfs embodying what tarnishes their image, what is blameworthy and reprehensible. In this way the dwarfs clear the gods of less flattering traits, and they become a kind of hypostasis, having acquired almost complete independence. This hypothesis would have the undeniable merit of satisfactorily explaining the surprising proximity, if not to say kinship, of the dwarfs and the Vanir. I will add two more sets of complementary details: the dwarfs know the future, the Vanir are seers; the first group follows its own specific moral code, the second group is amoral.

The only member of the pantheon who might serve for the dwarfs as a putative godfather or patron would be Loki—a complex figure who has yet to be elucidated completely from an array of contradictory analyses. He is a faithless and lawless individual, who is heartless and has no honor and is cunning and amoral. Loki embodies evil and disorder, and he precipitates the world toward Ragnarok. By turns a man, a mare, a falcon, a fly, a salmon, a seal, a witch, a peasant girl milking the cows—a splendid example of the theme of metamorphosis—he is the father of the monsters that will usher in chaos. Through his daughter, Hel, he is connected to the realm of the dead.

Although he is often called a god, he is originally neither one of the Vanir nor the Æsir, but a member that has been added on. The best proof of this is that he has left few traces in the worship or in the place names, just like the dwarfs.

Loki was merged into the *Æsir*, and the mythologists of the Middle Ages made him a relative of Odin. Triads of the type such as Odin–Hœnir–Loki display this aggregation. What we see here in this order is an *Æsir*-god, a Vanir-god, and the figure in question.

Is this really all that surprising? No, because the *Æsir* "pulled" to themselves other mythical races, such as the Vanir and the giants. After their war against the Vanir, the *Æsir* sent them as hostages Hœnir and Mímir ("Memory"), and Mímir was originally a giant. During Ragnarok, Loki is the enemy of the gods, and he and Heimdall kill each other. Loki is also the one steering the ship that from the North is carrying the troops of Hel; in other words, the wicked dead who will mount the assault against Asgard (World of the Gods). In the *Völuspá*, in which this story is told, the expression *kióll ferr austan* can be understood to mean "a ship" or "a ship that journeys from the East."[57] In the latter case, this vessel would be Naglfar, the ship made from the fingerand toenails of the dead. The metaphors in the *Skáldskaparmál* call Loki "the vexing litigant against Heimdall," "the one who slanders and betrays the gods," and "the one who engineered Baldr's death."[58] All these elements show that Loki cannot be a god, even if the poets lend him this title.

In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri Sturluson depicts him as follows:

> Named Loki or Loptr, he is the son of the giant Farbauti. His mother is Laufey or Nal, and his brothers are Byleistr and Helblindi. Loki is pleasing, even beautiful to look at, but his nature is evil and he is undependable… . With Angrboða, an ogress who lived in Giant Land, Loki had three children.[59]

Loki is therefore the son of a giant, but this does not mean in any way that his morphology is identical to that of his father; furthermore, the *Sörla þáttr* written down in the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript compiled between 1380 and 1393 describes him as "a fellow who is small in size."[60] In this way, Loki resembles Reginn from the legend of Sigurðr. Reginn is the size of a dwarf while being a "frost giant," which clearly demonstrates the relative nature of the indications of stature and corroborates what we discussed earlier (see here).

The dwarfs appear to have an affinity to the Vanir, but we have just also seen that they are not far removed from giants. Are these observations compatible?

In his study of Germanic mythology, Georges Dumézil came to the conclusion that the Vanir are fairly close to giants, and there are three major

traits that oppose these two races to the Æsir:[61]

1. The giants and the Vanir are essentially wealthy.
2. Both groups have a taste for sensual pleasures.
3. Conjugal unions are formed between members of the Vanir and giants.

The first two points likewise apply to dwarfs, who have the wealth of the underworld at their disposal—and which they sometimes use, as in the story of Freya's necklace, to satisfy their sexual appetite. And if we expand the scope of our investigation, the German literature of the Middle Ages acknowledges that dwarfs exhibit a certain sexuality: they abduct mortals or try to rape them.

There are other features that are also shared by giants and dwarfs. First and foremost among these is knowledge, and the *Poetic Edda* offers us a splendid parallel in this regard. In the *Vafþrúðnismál* (Sayings of Vafþrúðnir), Odin tests his knowledge against that of the giant Vafþrúðnir ("Mighty Weaver"), and in the *Alvíssmál* (Sayings of Alvíss), Thor compares his learning to that of the dwarf Alvíss. Then there is the connection of the dwarfs and giants to poetry: according to the myth of Kvasir, which we discussed earlier (see here), the Mead of Poetry passed from the hands of the dwarfs into those of the giants. We may also mention the relationship of both groups to the dead. When Brynhildr travels to the realm of the dead after being cremated on the pyre of Sigurðr, she meets a giant on her way. A final detail shared by giants and dwarfs is that both excel at magic, even if the first group is undoubtedly the more talented in this regard.

These elements I have just laid out allow us to understand why Loki's nature vacillates between that of a dwarf and that of a giant. There are barely any differences between the two races. Finally, Loki is a marvelous reflection of the ambiguity that is characteristic of all these individuals. Let us more closely examine his similarities with the dwarfs.

Loki is a dyed-in-the-wool thief. He steals the apples of Iðunn, the fruits of youth; Sif 's hair; Freya's necklace; Thor's magic gloves; and the ring of Andvari. Readers will recall that in the *Þidreks saga*, Álfrikr (Alberîch) is called "master thief," and that in the Germanic literature, dwarfs possess a solid reputation as robbers—a reputation that has rubbed off on the elves, and

one which we find in France among the sprites.

Loki is also an artisan. In the *Fjölvinnsmál* (Sayings of Fjölvinn),[62] he is reputed to have crafted *Lævateinn* ("Damage-twig") by means of runes (that is, magic) in front of the Corpse Gate (*Nágrind*), which is to say, by the gates to the realm of the dead. With this lethal branch, a person can slay the bird Víðófnir.

In another Eddic poem, Loki even appears in a list of dwarf names, but unfortunately the text is open to a dual interpretation: in the first case, we can see that Loki has become associated with dwarfs to build the edifice rising "beyond the threshold of the sons of the Æsir," which, according to Georges Dumézil, would represent the palace of Menglöð, alias Freya;[63] in the second case, we may understand Loki as being a dwarf.

At several points earlier in this book, I have underscored the importance of water that often appears as the natural element of dwarfs. Loki is also close to this element in a number of respects: first of all, through his transformation into a seal and a salmon; secondly, by his invention of the fishing net; and finally, by the role he plays in the murder of Otr (see here) and in his compensation.

There are also some extremely mysterious elements that deserve a moment of consideration. In Swedish, the word for a spider (*locke/lock*) is akin to the name Loki, and a spiderweb is called "Loki's net" (*loksnät/ locksnara*) as well as "dwarf's net" (*dvergsnät*). This dwarf/spider association is certainly very archaic, as it is not an isolated occurrence. In Breton, the word *korr* means both spider and dwarf. It is a fantastic opening onto the world of myths and beliefs to see that a charm in Old English is based on the same equivalency. In this charm, "Against a Dwarf" (*wið dweorh*), the dwarf is seen as an unidentified illness—perhaps convulsions—and it "comes in the form of a spider."[64] This allows us to recognize that a compound word like the Swedish *dvergsnät* is no mere coincidence, but is based on an ancient representation. As for the connection between Loki, dwarfs, and spiders, it may be quite simple: if Loki has been understood to be a dwarf, it is in a way normal that the spiderweb would bear his name as it specifically brings to mind the fishing net.

Although he does not possess their immense knowledge, Loki has a connection to giants because he can transform himself in a similar manner to them. He is close to dwarfs because of his size, his thieving nature, his artisanal activity, and through his connections to the otherworld, among

others, that of his daughter Hel, goddess of the underworld of the dead. All this speaks in favor of Axel Olrik's hypothesis that suggests they can be seen as evil spirits (*ildvaette*), or that of Hilding Celander, according to whom Loki would be a goblin, which is to say a mischievous pixie and trickster. Jan de Vries has dismantled these theories, but in the opinion of Georges Dumézil, he has underestimated the contributions made by folklore.[65] I will say that Loki most certainly comes from folk traditions, and if he comes across as bewildering, it is precisely because of his marginal, hybrid nature, that of a figure between two worlds. His ambiguity is that of the beings of folk beliefs, that of the "savage mind" that has not yet been domesticated and systematized. Loki is the eruption of fantasy inside a pantheon that is organized and frozen, and in which each god has his function. He is an intruder that the gods cannot do without, despite his nasty tricks, for he shows imagination.

If the dwarfs must be attached to one of the inhabitants of Asgard, Loki is the one who would be most suitable. His function and character lend themselves to the connection, and if this figure possesses several of the traits of giants, this poses no obstacle to the interpretation, for don't dwarfs and giants form an antithetical—and therefore complementary—pair? Alas, the whole display ends at an aporia. The only possible course is to establish a body of assumptions in the hopes that they will find support from the reader. The texts with which we have to work already come at the end of a very long history, about which we know practically nothing, and this prehistory has been marked by the stratification of different cultures, each of which had its own concept of the gods. One people consists of fishermen or herders, another is a people of hunters or warriors, and they therefore give privilege to one or another of the three functions. Reasoning and reflecting on Germanic mythology means examining different ethnic groups and asking questions like, Did a Goth share the same concerns as an Angle or a Frisian? Some gods are only attested in one region—such as Nehalennia near the mouth of the Rhine, Mars Thingsus in Britain, and so on—or our sources provide permanent overlaps that obscure the paths of research. It seems clear that we will never reach the point of certainty, at least in terms of certitudes that can be demonstrated by a + b. Anyone who reads the ancient texts and strives to decipher them in their proper meaning, taking them seriously but not forgetting they are, after all, the products of human beings—that person shall get a glimpse of the turbulence that reigned over the genesis of this

mythology.

Gods are born, evolve, and die with men and their civilization; they welcome outsiders like Loki into their midst, whom they elevate to their rank, while discharging their obsolete ancestors from the pantheon because no one believes in them anymore, or else because they have been downgraded to the rank of spirits, genies, and even humans. Such are the nebulous areas in which we find ourselves here, so every approach to this material must ultimately be deemed one hypothesis among many.

7

THE ELVES

The Philosophy, Cultural Prospects, and Legends Surrounding Them

Much more enigmatic and mysterious than the dwarfs, elves give the impression of being almost a decorative element in Germanic mythology. They are never described, and what they can do, what role they play, or what duty they perform can only be learned through deduction and cross-referencing. All evidence suggests that they belong to a very ancient stratum of the civilizations of the East and North, like the dwarfs, moreover, whom they supplanted. Everything indicates that elves figure in the mythology as vestiges of a remote past—a past most likely predating the first or second century AD, since Tacitus (ca. 56–120 CE) mentions that the Germanic peoples venerated women called Albruna,[1] a term composed of two nouns, *alb-/elb-*, "elf" (serving as the head in the compound) + *rún-*, an old Germanic word that primarily designates magic secrets (acting as the modifier in the compound).[2]

To discover their identity, I propose to follow the same methods used for the dwarfs, and we shall start by examining "elf."

A BIT OF PHILOLOGY

Elves did not exist in France during the Middle Ages. We borrowed this term from the Germanic languages in the sixteenth century to designate fairies. It remained a rarity until the nineteenth century, when it began be used to designate fantastical beings akin to "dwarfs."

In Germany, "elf" (*alp, elbe*) occurs but rarely in texts until the thirteenth century. After this time, the word was systematically employed as a synonym

for “dwarf” (*zwerc*), or “nightmare” (*mar*).

In England, “elf” (*ælf, elf;* pl. *ylfe*) was used until the beginning of the eleventh century. It then underwent the same evolution as its continental Germanic cognate and became commingled with all the other citizens of the lower mythology.

In the Scandinavian countries, the elf (Old Norse *álfr*, pl. *álfar*) is practically always a simple dwarf (*dvergr*), and the same individual can alternately be called “elf ” and “dwarf,” which clearly shows that the poets of this time no longer knew that the two names should be applied to two different creatures.

In short, everywhere we have the sense that this term concerns a being that had reached the end of its independent and autonomous existence and only survived in the form of certain representations that were already petrified or were in the process of becoming so. This explains the use of the term “elf” as a synonym for “dwarf.” Contaminations of this type oblige us to turn once again to etymology and to revisit the details I pointed out above (see here).

Several great scholars have been fascinated by this problem; for example, Jacob Grimm and Ferdinand de Saussure. Examining the forms *alf, ælf, alb/alp*, and *elbe*, Grimm reached the intuitive conclusion that the term was related to the Latin *albus*, “white,” as well as to the well-known mountains, the “Alps,” which are white when covered with snow, and finally to *Elbe*, a name designating limpid, clear waters,[3] and Saussure followed his lead on this point.[4] Elis Wadstein takes the term back to the Indo-European root **albh-*, “to shine, to be white,” a widely accepted conclusion because the etymology proposed by Adalbert Kuhn and echoed by Jan de Vries did not gain support. Probably because he found Wadstein’s derivation overly simplistic, Kuhn saw the root word for “elf” in the Sanskrit *.rbhu*, “skilled artist,” because *.rbhu* is the name of the demons who forge the jewels of the gods.[5] This is etymologically impossible, and I can safely say that this researcher fell victim to the conflation of the elf with the figure of the dwarf as metalsmith.

In fact, the elf is a white creature, a brightly shining being, which reflects a beneficient nature based on the law mentioned earlier, that of the close interrelation between physical appearance and character. Does this proposition stand up to analysis?

The lexeme *alp* (and its equivalents) enters into a large number of

personal names. For England, Richard Jente has drawn up a list of thirty-five names, among which we find *Ælfbeorht*, "Elf-Bright," and *Ælfwine*, "Elf Friend."[6] The same phenomenon can be seen in Germany, but there are even more names, and the oldest one, *Alpho* (or *Albo*) is confirmed by documents from around the year 700. Between this date and the year 1050, we are confronted by a veritable panoply of compound words based on *alp*/*alf*.[7] The first name of Pepin of Herstal's wife, for example, was Albhaidis. Would individuals have been given names like this if elves were viewed as malevolent and evil? Of course not! By contrast, no personal names were coined from *zwerc/dvergr/ dweorg*, which is extremely revealing. In earlier times, a person's name played a major role. It was believed that it enabled its owner to play a part in the entire cosmos, and of course, it bound the person to the spirits—both of the dead and of the land—and to the gods, and therefore it was not bestowed by chance. The term "elf" was well represented in personal names because the benevolent creature from whom people received their names became in some way a patron spirit, a guardian angel. During pagan times, the owner of a name like this was dedicated to the supernatural being it designated. This occurred very frequently among the Germanic peoples. We may consider, for example, a name like Thórketill, which survived to the present day in Normandy as T(h)urquetill and means "Thor's Cauldron." There is also Thorsteinn ("Thor's Stone") and Thórólfr ("Thor's Wolf"). The name of the god Freyr/Frodi can be found in Frómundr, which in Old French was Froimont. In his study of personal names composed from "elf," Nils Thun rightly concludes that they "were coined at a time when elves were regarded as friendly creatures."[8] For her part, Heather Stuart is of the opinion that names like this "seem to indicate that elves were considered to be wise, invulnerable, and capable of favouring chosen mortals."[9]

Based on the meaning of *alb-*, "white," and on the existence of these ancient personal names, we can assert that elves were originally good and beautiful spirits, which makes them the opposite of the "twisted" harmful dwarfs.

THE ELVES OF LIGHT

Once Asgard had been built, the Aesir began constructing wondrous dwellings there for each of the gods. One of them is called Álfheimr, which

means “World of the Elves.” It is difficult to precisely locate it: according to some texts it is at the heart of the second heaven. That makes it coincide with Gimlé, the most beautiful of the heavenly halls, located at the southernmost tip of the sky. It has been recognized as an abode of souls (a term used here without any Christian connotation), the sanctuary for humans who are just and good.[10]

The Æsir made a gift of the World of the Elves to Freyr, the Vanir god who had come to Asgard as a hostage following the war that pitted the two major groups of Scandinavian gods against each other. Son of Njörðr, avatar of the goddess Nerthus, which is to say Mother Earth, and brother of Freya, the northern Venus whom “it is good to call on in matters of love,” Freyr is the embodiment of the Third Function: “He controls the rain and the shining of the sun,”—this brings Aubéron to mind—“and through them all bounty of the earth. It is good to invoke him for peace and abundance. He also determines men’s success in prosperity.”[11]In fact, the Njörðr–Freyr–Freya triad is the result of a process of polymorphism: Nerthus has “exploded” into three distinct deities, each of whom specializes in a specific domain within the same function. Njörðr is the patron of sailing and fishing, and Freya oversees love and pleasure. By placing the elves under Freyr’s aegis, the ancient mythographers, with Snorri Sturluson at the forefront, placed them in the sphere of fertility and fruitfulness. It is quite possible that at one time in their historical evolution, elves were gods in their own right. It is tempting to accept this hypothesis in view of the triadic expressions that insert them alongside the Æsir and the Vanir. There is a good example of this in the Eddic poem *För Skírnis* (Skírnir’s Journey), where we read: “I am not one of the elves, nor one of the Æsir, nor one of the shrewd Vanir.”[12] But as gods, the elves would not have been singled out, and they would reflect a complex of notions centered on the Third Function—a complex that the Vanir would have absorbed.

The elves living in close proximity to the gods are called “light elves” (*Ljósálfar*), and brightness and radiance are clearly their primary morphological characteristic. One kenning calls the sun the “gleam of the elf-world.” However, this is all we know about this aspect of these beings.

There are various indications (which, however, need to be handled cautiously) that strongly suggest that the elves had magic powers at their command, and the Eddas indicate that a certain Dáinn (Death) carved the runes for them. Unfortunately, the same thing is said about the dwarfs and

about the Norns, the Nordic Fates. Fortunately, patience and luck are the province of researchers, and once our attention had been drawn to this point, we gathered together some revealing clues.

The Old English term *ælfsiden*, literally meaning "elf-magic," appears in texts dating from around the year 1000, the context of which allows us to translate it as "sorcery, enchantment." *Siden*(*n*) is akin to the Norse *seiðr* that designates, as we have mentioned (see here), a heavily stigmatized form of magic at which the Vanir excelled; recall that it is a Vanir god that rules over the elves. Our second clue is a German charm from the sixteenth or seventeenth century, and which is certainly much older judging by the language. It is intended to ward off glanders (*malleus*), an infectious disease specific to horses. To perform this spell, it must be written on any kind of support material that is then placed in the fodder or on the animal that has been infected. It so happens that this charm opens with the formula:

Albo + Albuo + Alubo +

A new clue is the magical sign of the pentacle, which the Germans call the *Alpfuss* ("Elf-Foot") or *Trutenfuss* ("Trute's Foot").[*16] And finally, there are the small crosses—from one to one-and-a-half inches high—that are found in archaeological excavations. One such cross bears the following conjuration: *Contra elphos hec in plumbo scrive* (Against the elves, write this on lead), which would make it an amulet intended to provide protection from elves,[13] or more specifically—if we keep in mind *ælfsiden*—protection from their enchantments.

But the major clue that testifies to the magical powers of elves is the German name for mandrake, *Alraun*, meaning "Elf-secret"; in the tenth century, this name appeared in the form *Albrûna*, which incidentally corresponds to the name of the Germanic seeresses described by Tacitus. There is a well-known body of superstitions attached to this humanshaped plant that is sometimes male and sometimes female. It grows beneath the bodies of hanged men whose semen or urine has fertilized the soil. If it is dug up without taking the necessary precautions, it lets out a cry that is lethal to whoever hears it. It is therefore necessary to take it on a Friday morning before dawn, after stopping up your ears with wax or wool. You must bring with you a black dog that does not have one single white hair, and draw three crosses above the mandrake, dig all around it and attach the plant to the dog's tail, then hold a piece of bread in front of the dog's face. He will come after the bread, pulling out the plant, but will then fall dead because of its cry.

After this, harvest the mandrake, wash it in wine, wrap it in a silk cloth, and place it in a chest. In order for it to retain its powers, it must be bathed every Friday and its "little shirt" changed. What is most striking about this legend is the close relationship it establishes between death, fertility, magic, and elves, and the mandrake could serve to some extent as an emblem for these creatures. Another connection can also be seen: all the operations involving the mandrake plant take place on Friday; in other words "Freya's Day." It so happens that this goddess is the sister of Freyr, the lord of the elves.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Did the elves become connected to Freyr because they enjoyed cultic worship, or did it occur the other way around? No one today is in any position to say, and the information at our disposal barely enlightens us.

In the *Ynglinga saga*, which Snorri recounts in *Heimskringla*, there is an elf named Yngvi (which is a cognomen of Freyr); Yngvi has a brother a certain Álfr.[14] Another elf is named Thror, a name coined from the verb "to grow, to prosper," which reflects the Third Function; another is named Virvir, which could be a corruption of Virfill (a word that etymologists have connected to Latin *verpa*, "penis"); now, it so happens that Freyr is always represented with a good-sized phallus (*cum ingenti priapo*).

One thing is certain: there was cultic worship dedicated to the elves, and we have several pieces of evidence for this. The first is provided by language: *jól*, the pagan Yuletide, is designated by a synonym, the compound word *álfablót*, the "sacrifice to the elves." This complex festival, in which the winter solstice is celebrated, combines commemoration of the dead with fertility rites. A major sacrifice is performed on this occasion "for a fruitful year and peace," in which Freyr is invoked and a special beer is brewed. It was a servant of this god, Byggvir, the personification of barley (*bygg*), who reputedly knew how to "successfully brew" good beer.[15] In the context of this celebration, in which ancestor worship plays a preponderant role, we have the elves associated with Freyr and the dead—in other words, we have hit upon the same complex that underlies the mandrake story.

The *álfablót* was a reality, not a mythological fantasy, and the skald Sigvatr Þórðarson tells of how, during a trip he made to Sweden in 1018, the peasants refused him hospitality because they were specifically performing

this sacrifice.[16]

The *Kormáks saga,* which is told by the skald Kormákr Ögmundarson (ca. 940–1000), gives us an equally revealing image of what the elves can grant to those who know how to gain their good will:

> Thorvard's wounds were slow to heal. He went to see Thordis and asked him how he could recover his health. She told him: "Not far from here is a mound in which the elves live. Take the bull that Kormak slew, paint the mound with its blood and prepare a meal for the elves from its meat. Then you will start to get better." Thorvard followed her advice and his health rapidly improved.[17]

Let us note in passing the place of residence for the elves, as it partially explains how it was possible to conflate these beings with dwarfs, the spirits of the dead, and the spirits of the land.

The sacred nature of the elves is expressed in an eloquent motif: they cannot stand defilement, waste, so certain precautions had to be taken when human beings relieved themselves. In any case, this action should never be done in close proximity to a place where it was thought the elves lived. The Norse language has two expressions to say "relieve oneself (urinate or defecate):" *álfrek ganga* and *álfrek hava,* meaning "to drive out the elves." (Let us recall Aubéron, who, on the moral plane, could not tolerate any lie or sin. Now wouldn't sin be a form of defilement?)

Here is a curiosity from folk traditions that closely reflects the mythology. In *Les Évangiles des quenouilles* [The Distaff Gospels], written in Picardy toward the middle of the fifteenth century, it is said that making water will send imps or sprites fleeing:

> Another very old woman told me that before she was married, an imp followed her wherever she went at night and scared her greatly. One of my neighbors told me, "Bring bread with you and when you need to piss, do it at your ease and during that time eat your bread; if it sees you doing that, it will no longer follow you."[18]

There is definitely a certain relationship that exists between sprites/ imps, elves, and dwarfs, and this evidence needs to be added to our dossier, as it allows us to clarify the matter.

ELVES AND THE DEAD

Like the correspondence between the Latin words *homo*, "man," and *humus*, "soil," the dead are closely connected with the fertility of the soil, which causes a confusion between them and practically all the beings that can be described as land spirits or guardian spirits (*vættir*, *landvættir*). The dead have direct power over the fertility of the earth, among other things because they have command over the elements,[19] or simply because they serve as an intermediary between men and gods, with whom they—now having returned to a sacred status themselves—are able to intercede on behalf of their family and clan. The good dead become fertile ground. Of course, all could be assimilated to elves, but several texts nevertheless show how the transition from a good, dead individual to an elf takes place.

Those who are elevated to the status of elves, therefore minor divinities, are those dead whose lives were particularly exemplary or beneficial for their contemporaries. This is the same attitude that in folk Christianity compelled people to make into saints—without going through Rome—those of their fellows who were, so to speak, "superhumans."[20] This parallel in responses is deserving of a detailed study for, at first glance, it concerns a Christian form of ancestor worship. The one notable difference: these popular saints have a sphere of activity that extends beyond the simple familial, tribal, or village-centered context. Having performed their duty during their lifetimes, and respected the tacit and written laws of the society, they are honored with the thought that they will continue to watch over those they have left behind—in short, they will be good ancestors. We should not forget that the Germanic peoples believed that the dead were never truly dead. They continued their life in the afterworld, so there is no reason for their character to change: if someone had been good, he or she would remain good. This mental attitude explains why so many precautions were taken with regard to those individuals who had met a suspicious end.[21]

Ólaf Gudrødsson met the criteria just outlined above, so after his burial beneath a mound in Geirstad he was given the nickname "the Elf of Geirstad." Halfdan Hvitbeinn was buried in Skiringssal, where he was mourned as "the Elf with the Breastplate."[22] These testimonies help to clarify and explain how the elves became associated with a precise category of deceased individuals: both groups are acting within the domain of the Third Function.

THE BLACK ELVES AND THE DARK

ELVES

Snorri Sturluson introduced a disruptive element into the traditions that generated a certain amount of confusion by making a distinction between the *svartálfar* (“black elves”) and the *døkkálfar* (“dark elves”). In the *Gylfaginning* (chap. 17) he tells us:

> [There is a place] called Álfheimr. The people called the light elves live there, but the dark elves live down below in the earth.

This is the sole occurrence of the term *døkkálfar* in Norse literature, and it finds no support from any other branch of Germanic literature. To add to the confusion, Snorri explicitly says that these elves are “blacker than pitch.”

The “dark elves” appear to be a duplicate, however, of the “black elves” proper, whom we meet in another chapter of the same book. Odin sends Skírnir, one of Freyr’s servants (in fact, almost certainly the hypostasis of this god), to *Svartálfaheimr*, which is to say to the “World of the Black Elves,” to ask the creatures living there to forge the chain necessary to bind the wolf Fenrir. The wording of the original text (*sendi … ofan i Svartálfaheim til dverga nökkura*) logically demonstrates that the inhabitants of this world are dwarfs (*dvergar*). There is a further bit of evidence in the fact that this request involves the forging of a chain, and this craft was the province of the dwarfs, at least in the literature of this era.

In the *Skáldskaparmál*, Snorri does it again: after the murder of the sons of Hreidmar (see the first part of the story of Sigurðr), Odin sends Loki to *Svartálfaheimr*, the “World of the Black Elves,” to obtain the financial compensation required for this murder. The text then reads: “there Loki found the dwarf called Andvari” (chap. 46). Our case is made! Black elves are dwarfs. But what becomes of the dark elves?

Let’s sum up the elements of the problem. According to Snorri, there are three kinds of elves, whose color can only reflect their character: the good ones are fair and luminous, whereas the wicked ones are black; theoretically, then, the dark elves should fall between the other two and have a less pronounced malevolent character than the black elves.

It has been suggested that Snorri transposed the story of the white angels and the black angels into the mythological domain. Eastern influences have been assumed—the cherubim, for example, and even the souls of the dead as viewed from a Christian perspective. This explanation is very appealing, especially if we fill in some additional details.

With the invention of the concept of Purgatory, souls were divided into

three groups: some went to heaven, while others went to hell, but those who were neither fundamentally good nor fundamentally evil would have to go to Purgatory and spend a period of time there that was in proportion to their sins.[23] Snorri may have based his tripartition of the elves on this model.

We can also conceive of another hypothesis that draws on the legend of the neutral angels, which was very popular in the Germanic countries. When Lucifer rebelled against the Creator, some followed him, others took the side of God, and yet still others, hesitant and indecisive, did not take part but waited to see how things would turn out. They were punished in a similar way to the rebels. Lucifer's followers were cast into hell and became black demons; the neutral angels were cast down to earth. They sank down roots there and became the fairies, dwarfs, and spirits.[24] Was Snorri familiar with this legend? It is impossible to say, but we should recognize that the triad it offers, that of fairies-dwarfs-spirits, can be infinitely varied by playing on the kinship of the beings of the lower mythology, and we can clearly observe a shift by which the light elves replace the fairies, the dark elves substitute for the spirits, and the black elves take the place of the dwarfs.

VÖLUNDR, PRINCE OF THE ELVES

More widely known as Wayland the Smith (German Wieland; Old Norse Völundr, Velentr; Old English Weland; Old French Galan), this famous blacksmith possesses a legend worthy of note, which I will briefly summarize:

> Three brothers, Völundr (Wayland), Egill, and Slagfiðr, discovered some swan maidens spinning flax near a lake. They took their feather garments and hid them, after which the wondrous creatures agreed to marry the brothers since they could not fly away. After several years, the women found their magic clothing again by chance and vanished forever. Egill and Slagfiðr went off in pursuit of their respective wives, but Völundr remained by himself in Wolf-dales and devoted himself to the art of smithing. The king Niðuðr (or Niðaðr) stole all his wealth and, at the urgings of his wife, had Völundr crippled. Völundr managed to avenge himself, however: he killed Niðuðr's two sons and raped his wife before flying away on the wings he had crafted.

The *Völundarkviða* (Song of Völundr), [25] from which I took this information, is formed from the joining of several themes which, depending

on the versions and the fragments of the legend we possess, are not all confirmed. The Norse *Þidreks saga* does not include the presence of the swan maidens, but it tells us that Velentr's grandfather was the king Vilcinus and his grandmother was a water sprite. She gave birth to the giant Vadi, our hero's father. We should note, incidentally, this curious line of descent: water sprite–giant–man. The son of Velentr is Viðga (German Witege), which is confirmed by *Waldere*, an Anglo-Saxon poem from before the year 1000, and the *Buch von Bern*, a thirteenth-century German epic. In this latter text, the mythical ancestor of Wieland is named Wachilt and is a water sprite.[26] Thus, in one way or another, the figure of Wayland has a very close relationship with the element of water.

In the *Poetic Edda*, Völundr is called "prince of elves" three times, and even "wise elf," which assumes that a bond of kinship or sovereignty unites him to these beings. I should expressly state that this connection is quite remarkable, because elves were not seen as smiths during the time period in which our sources were being written. In an attempt to shed light on this matter, we are going to have to reason out several hypotheses.

If Völundr is really the prince of elves, this would imply that he lives in Asgard, at the side of the gods, in which case this legendary figure could only be the final manifestation of a deity, perhaps one of lower rank, and he would have been supplanted by Freyr, who received Álfheimr (World of the Elves) when he moved in with the Æsir. In Nordic mythology the gods were smiths, at the very beginning of their existence:

> Next, they [the gods] set up forges and made hammer, tongs, and anvil, and with these they fashioned all other tools. Following this, they worked metal, stone, wood and great quantities of gold, such that all their furniture and household utensils were of gold. That age is called the Golden Age (*er sú öld kölluð gullaldr*)… .[27]

We can probably agree it would have been one of the members of the pantheon who was most skilled with his hands that was entrusted with this work.

In a very extensive etymological study based on solid arguments, Franz Rolf Schröder was able to reasonably show that the figure of Wayland was related to the Roman Volcanus, to the Cretan Zeus Felchanos, the Etruscan Velchans, and the Iranian Ossetian Wärgon.[28] He must have been a smith god before being reduced to the status of a mere human. This devolution had already been achieved by the sixth century, as is evident from the carvings on

the Franks Casket, a runecovered chest manufactured in Northumbria and discovered in Auzon, in the Upper Loire Valley. Caesar also writes, in this brief mention he gives of the ancient Germans in *The Gallic War* (VI, 21, 2):

> They count among the gods only those whom they see and whose benefits they openly tangibly feel—namely, the Sun, Vulcan, and the Moon.

It has been suggested that a reflection of the three Indo-European functions can be seen behind this trio: a sovereign god of the Odin type, Thor (Vulcan), and a goddess of fertility. This interpretation is quite plausible, and I can support it. Georges Dumézil suggests that we see Thor behind the reference to "Vulcan,"[29] which, if we accept Franz Rolf Schröder's analysis, confirms that Völundr is the manifestation of an ancient god. This theory is viable because Germanic mythology provides us with other examples of this kind of reduction in status. Þjazi, a very ancient god of the North, became a giant, and Skadi, eponymous ancestor of Scandinavia, became nothing more than a telluric giantess bearing a male name.

By reexamining our sources from this angle, we can flesh out the hypothesis. From a purely formal point of view, it seems significant that the *Poetic Edda* situates the *Völundarkviða* not among the heroic songs but among the mythological poems, inserting it between the *Þrymskviða* (Song of Thrym), which features Thor and the giant Thrym, who aspires for the hand of Freya, and the *Alvíssmál*, which recounts Thor's conversation with a dwarf. Considering the arrangement of these poems, Völundr appears to be connected to Thor, the god of the hammer, whom a Roman like Julius Caesar certainly would have identified with Vulcan during a time period in which he was unaware of the context of Germanic religion. However, is it not the case that Thor is representative of the Second Function rather than the Third?

THOR AND THE ELVES

The lexicon of the Germanic languages, especially the names of the plants and minerals, associate the god Thor—German *Donar*, Anglo-Saxon *Þunor*—with the elves. Belemnite, for example, is called "Donar's coin" and "elf-shot" in German; Houseleek (*joubarbe* in French) comes from the common Latin *barba Jovis* (Jove's beard!) and in Germanic regions bears the name of "Donar's broom" or "Donar's herb" as well as that of "elf-wand."[30]

Furthermore, a glance at anthropomastics (human personal names) reveals the existence of a "Thor's elf " (*Thorálfr*) in Scandinavia and a "Donar of the elves" or "Donar to the elves" (*Albthonar*) in an eighth-century document from the Abbey of Fulda (Lower Saxony). Legitimate questions can be raised about these links.

In medieval beliefs, Thor/Donar did not only embody the Second Function (war). Describing the Temple of Uppsala, Adam of Bremen, who died shortly after 1080, cites the presence there of statues of Odin and Freyr (Fricco) on either side of Thor, and he adds: "Thor rules in the air, commands thunder and lightning, wind and rain, the sunshine and the fruits [of the earth]."[31] Here Thor is reflective of the Third Function. This aspect of the god was long maintained by the Lapps, who knew the "Good fellow Thor" and made offerings to him "so that he would spare the people and animals, and bring the fertilizing rain"; in southern Sweden, Thor was called "the good peasant" or the "good fellow of wheat, or of the fields."[32] It is certainly because of the way he spills over into the Third Function that Thor must have been connected with elves.

One final point deserves to be made. Like Odin and Freya, Thor is awarded a certain portion of the dead; the *Hárbarzlióð* (Lay of Hárbarð) informs us that Thor's portion consisted of "thralls." With great astuteness, Jan de Vries suggests that the anonymous poet of the lay substituted this term for an undoubtedly less ignominious notion, which was probably "free farmers" (*bœndr*).[33] This takes us to a fairly balanced whole: Odin and Freya gathered the warriors fallen in battle; Thor and Freyr received the free farmers, and Hel received the "neutral" dead.

Let us now return to the legend of Völundr.

THE SWAN MAIDENS AND THE ELVES

Völundr and his brothers married swan maidens. But as mythology teaches us, there can be no lasting union between beings that do not belong to the same world (a theme that reappears in another form in the story of Melusine). When Njörðr, god of the sea, wed Skaði, a giantess of the land, their marriage ended in failure. When Baldr, Odin's son, asked Nana, a mere mortal, to marry him, she refused, arguing that it was impossible to unite what the order of the world kept too far apart. When the swan maidens eventually leave their husbands, it is because, in my opinion, the story recycles the theme of the theft of clothing: when the beings of Faery or

fantasy recover their clothing, they must vanish and return to their own world; this is a constraint they cannot ignore, no matter what feelings they have for the humans they married.[34] In the *Völundarkviða,* the couples live happily until the fatal moment when their feather garments are rediscovered; we see no dissonance here. Let us take a closer look at what the wives of Völundr and his brothers actually are.

The three women's names are Alvitr, Svanhvít, and Ölrun. The second name is thoroughly transparent and means "White as a swan." The first name is more interesting for the new horizons it opens to us. It can be interpreted as *al + hvítr,* "All-wise," or as *alb + vitr*, "Elven spirit; of the Elven race."

In the name "Ölrun," the first element, *öl,* could be related to "ale" (thus what the English label a light, pale beer, as opposed to stout, which is strong and dark). In this case we could translate Ölrun as "Secret of the Beer," which brings us back to the god Freyr's sphere of activity: Freyr, through his intermediary, the servant Byggvir, knew how to "successfully brew" beer. However, another analysis of the name is also conceivable: *öl* is traced back to a root **alu/albu,* "elf " and "white" (cf. Old Norse *alpt/alptr,* "swan," and Middle High German *alp/elbe,* "elf"). Ölrun would then be identical to Albruna, the title of the Germanic seeress according to Tacitus. This is actually quite revealing, since the underlying meaning of this name would be "Elf-Secret" or, more simply, "Secret of the White Being."[35] Whichever etymology we adopt, the swan maidens are related to elves, whether directly, or by their feathered garments—Freya also has a cloak like this—and their connection to water, or by their function (the Third Function), which is still quite visible in their occupation as spinners.

The objection could be made that swan maidens may be valkyries,[36] which is to say warrior maidens, who stand far removed from the Third Function. This objection does not stand up to scrutiny; it is a received idea and a Wagnerian notion. In fact, Odin is not alone in having valkyries in his service. Analysis of the texts and of the attested valkyrie names reveals that these women can be sorted into three major groups: some are indisputably warriors and bear the names of fighters ("Battle," "Force," "Paralyzing," etc.), others have "feminine"-sounding names, and the last group, which is the least numerous, has names associated with fate. [37] The goddess Freya has a right to half of those who die on the battlefield (*valr*), while the other half are reserved for Odin; furthermore, this goddess is also a swan maiden. I should add that because of the theme of transformation into swans, water is

also closely associated with these mythological legends. We are still evolving in the same great complex of representations: *elves/water–death–life–Third Function.* One final detail we may point out: the valkyries do not shun the love of men (cf. Brynhildr, who disobeys Odin on account of her love for Helgi), and a very ancient belief, which we see crop up more recently in the writings of Paracelsus, is that water sprites are the closest of such elemental spirits to humans and the most apt to form unions with them.[38]

The dead who are received by Odin are intended to lead a life of knightly warfare, but the texts are silent as to what becomes of the dead who join Freya. In conformance to the goddess's function, it seems reasonable to suppose they have an occupation other than war, or one that is a combination of love and battle.

And what is the role of Völundr in all this?

In the *Poetic Edda,* Völundr essentially appears to be a goldsmith: "He hammers the red gold / around the sparkling gems," it says, and he forged "all manner of precious items" for Niðuðr. Other than these examples of the goldsmith's craft, he only forged his sword. His place is therefore among the gods, during the Golden Age about which Snorri Sturluson speaks. There is a strong possibility that he may be the first smith of the gods, the "Volcanus" mentioned by Caesar. We should not overlook the fact that he shares several traits with Hephaestus. Like that god, he is crippled and lame, and his rape of Niðuðr's daughter is very reminiscent of Hephaestus's rape of Athena.

The link between Völundr and elves could be the shining metal, gold, but I can also imagine another hypothesis. If Völundr was a god, it would have been completely normal for him to have servants. These servants would have been elves, which does not necessarily imply that these creatures too were smiths at one time during their long existence.

Mythological traditions are quite muddled; functional overlaps occur with great frequency, and the correlations can be disconcerting. What compounds the difficulty of all research into Germanic beliefs and mythology is the absence of any clear-cut boundaries between the three functional levels and their expression in divine form. Georges Dumézil has shown that each function can be represented by one figure or by a group of figures, and these figures can be contemporaries or follow after one another, they may collaborate with or oppose one another, and they can accumulate several functions, either simultaneously or in succession.[39] A similar pattern holds true for the majority of peoples of the medieval West. Let us take the

mythology of the Celts as an example, which is a domain that the French and English are sometimes more familiar with than the Germanic traditions. Dagda is a builder god, the master of life and death—one end of his mallet (or hammer) kills, the other end resurrects. He is the organizer of divine feasts and drink. Manannan is the god of the dead, a fine example of the close ties woven between the deceased, water, and fertility. Again we encounter the same complex, this time among the Celts. This indicates that it is in all likelihood a very archaic set of associations, which would help explain the difficulties we are constantly encountering in unraveling it.

For greater clarity, we can provide a more concrete depiction of the kinship relationships revealed with the following diagram:

Complementary Pairs

God	Odin	Freya
Emissaries	Valkyries	swan maidens
Chosen ones	the dead of the 2nd function	the dead of the 1st/2nd function
Abode	Valhöll (Valhalla)	Fólkvangr

Adversarial Pairs

God	Freyr/Thor	Loki (?)
Emissarics	Elves	Dwarfs
Chosen ones	the dead of the 3rd function (positive)	the dead of the 3rd function (negative)
Abode	Álfheimr mounds	stones, mounds

IN THE LAND OF THE ELVES

We have presented Wayland as a smith god of the Golden Age and suggested that the color gold could have inspired his association with the

elves, whose essential feature is to sparkle and to shine. This is no gratuitous act or a hypothesis pulled out of thin air: it is based on a curious legend that the Welsh cleric Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis) recorded in his *Itinerarium Cambriae* (Journey through Wales), which he wrote around 1191. From the mouth of an old priest named Eliodorus, he heard a story that was based on an adventure his informant had allegedly experienced:

> When he was twelve, Eliodorus met two little men the size of Pygmies, who invited him to follow them underground. He accompanied them to their kingdom and became friends with the son of their king. He was able to travel between this other world and our own with no difficulty. One day his mother asked him to bring a gift back with him so he stole a golden ball from the subterranean beings. They pursued him and took it back. After this incident, Eliodorus was never able to return to their world.[40]

This text contains a wealth of details, among which stand out the following: the kingdom is a land of play and pleasure, a beautiful country of rivers, green meadows, forests, and plains. A kind of darkness reigned there, as the sun did not shine on it directly; the days there were misty, and neither the moon nor the stars illuminated the nights. This mist is reminiscent of the name of the Nibelungen and of Montnuble, the castle of Aubéron according to Gandor of Brie.

In this particular occasion, we have a summary description of these subterranean beings at our disposal, which also describes their mind-set and their food:

- They are small in size but possess immense qualities.
- They are yellow and have long hair.
- They eat a kind of milk-based broth flavored with saffron.
- Lies, fickleness, and infidelity are odious to them (this trait is strongly reminiscent of Aubéron).

The motif that seems the most important to me is the color of these creatures, which is yellow like gold, as Gerald explains, in his way, by their food. This kind of explanation is typical of clerical and scholarly traditions. For example, William of Newbury, who lived in the same general era as Gerald of Wales, tells the story in his *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (I, 27) of

green children that appeared one fine day in East Anglia, no one knew how, and he attributed the green color of their skin to the string beans that formed their primary diet in the otherworld. “Finally,” he said, “as the nature of our foods gains the upper hand, they gradually change color.”[41] The yellow color of the creatures Eliodorus met is frankly quite unusual, and despite all my efforts, I have been unable to find any other occurrence of this motif that is not Celtic.

In fact, the fantasy traditions of medieval Great Britain generally tend to lend the color green to all creatures coming from the otherworld, as is perfectly illustrated by Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a twelfthcentury romance.[42] Gawain accepts an invitation to play the beheading game with this mysterious figure and cuts off his head. The other picks it up and leaves after warning Gawain that he will have to go through the same ordeal one year later. This story is practically identical with those in which the illustrious hero of the Celtic epics, Cú Chulainn, plays the same game with Cú Roí, the king of the otherworld, or with the giant Uath mac Imoman.

The yellow-skinned beings described by Gerald of Wales are therefore on the fringes of these traditions, and I suggest that we can view them as elves. Two things impel me toward this assertion: their color, which implies radiance and brightness—and their virtuous and not deceptive character. We may also add the wealth of this kingdom, in which gold is almost common. While the great virtue of these creatures possibly allowed them to be reduced to a very widespread belief in which certain fantastic figures are the incarnation of all virtues, the gold color remains without an equivalent in other medieval traditions, and this speaks in favor of its antiquity.

AUBÉRON-ALBERÎCH

Thanks to the dossier I have compiled, we are now in a position to be able to answer the question raised earlier about Aubéron’s true nature.[43]

Aubéron is an elf, not a dwarf, as can be deduced from the facts. This is made clear by his great beauty, his shining nature, his hostility to all lies, and his magical powers: Aubéron has mastered the art of charm and illusion and is capable of creating mirages. He rules over the elements and is able to unleash wind and rain as he pleases. This ability makes him similar to Thor, as Adam of Bremen describes this god (see here), and as he has survived in folk beliefs in which, at an older stage of his history, he had a connection to the elves. Aubéron therefore falls into the Third Function as defined by

Dumézil.

That the little king of Faery might be a god is suggested by various aspects of his behavior toward Huon. When the young man refuses to answer him, Aubéron becomes wild with rage; when the man from Bourdeaux disobeys him, he grows angry and will only help his protégé after he has undergone the trials his disobedience has earned him. Aubéron is a capricious protector, whose friendship can, in the blink of an eye, turn to enmity. He imposes a kind of contract on Huon: he will give him the hanap "on the condition he (Huon) promises him to stay steadfast and act as he requests him to act"; he offers him the horn on the condition that Huon only uses it wisely. Every time, the shadow of a threat hovers over Huon concerning the consequences that the slightest infraction of the agreement would entail. From the moment they meet, Aubéron demands and forbids, in exchange for which he will lend his aid to the hero. It clearly involves a pact, behind which is visible one of the founding principles of the Germanic religion, the *do ut des,* the reciprocal exchange that governs the relations of men and gods. "I offer worship to you," the man tells the god, "grant me this or that in return." Was this not the attitude of Clovis on the eve of his battle against the Alemanni in 496?[44]

Other motifs suggest that Aubéron is the manifestation of a deity. He has command over animals and knows the secrets of heaven, which is to say the otherworld. He can read what is in the hearts of men and knows the past—he is five hundred years old, after all—and the future; he knows everything about Huon and overlooks nothing that is done or said in the world. This final detail accentuates the solar character of the little king of Faery. In fact, according to an extremely archaic myth, this kind of knowledge is the prerogative of the Sun God and is explained by his tireless course of this celestial body around the earth, during which the sun can see and hear everything.[*17]

Aubéron also behaves as a demanding guardian spirit, which arises out of the characteristics I have just mentioned. Like a good ancestor, he is extremely attached to the *honor* of his people, a point made explicit in *Ortnit,* where Alberîch is the father of the King of Lombardy and tests his son before aiding him. In *Huon de Bordeaux,* we can say that Aubéron takes Huon's destiny in hand, as his final intervention at Charlemagne's court leaves in no doubt. The fact that the poet did not make him Huon's father was due to the weight of literary traditions and of reality: Huon already has a father, the

Duke Seguin. Our author is thus unable to use the theme of kinship—already present in the other narratives (see here), but in my opinion, this theme is discernible behind Aubéron's legacy: the little king commands Huon to come to Monmur three years later to be made king of the realm of Faery. The explanation given is very superficial: Aubéron has the right to bestow his kingdom on the individual of his choice. The kinship theme also seems to underlie the punishments that Aubéron inflicts on his "friend." When Huon sleeps with Esclarmonde, a storm wrecks his ship—a tempest that was surely sent by the king of Faery. When Huon is moping on the island where he was abandoned by pirates, Aubéron still refuses to show him clemency until after the faery knight Gloriant and Malabron step in. Logically, therefore, Aubéron should have been related to the hero, as is the case in the traditions that inspired the author of *Huon de Bordeaux.*

As he is portrayed in the *Nibelungenlied,* Alberîch is clearly less typical and much closer to the dwarfs (*zwerge*). Only his undying fidelity toward his masters Nibelung and Schilbung, and then Siegfried, still testifies to his elfin nature, which, moreover, is clearly indicated by his name. Alberîch is already a character that has been heavily contaminated by common beliefs about dwarfs and by the image given to these individuals in the literature of the time. The objection might be made that the same is true of Aubéron. This is correct and the proof is in the way he is initially presented in the first part of *Huon de Bordeaux*: "The little woodland king that haunted the forests his entire life." But in fact, the problem is raised and resolved in another way: the behavior of Gériaume precisely reflects the fear inspired in men by the creatures of fantasy or Faery—whereas Huon's attitude is more reflective of curiosity—and the fear turns into panic when a malefic aura surrounds the being that emerges. For Gériaume, Aubéron is "the humpbacked dwarf, the cunning dwarf," the one to whom any word will bind the speaker forever. This dichotomy between Aubéron's true nature and the one that is imparted to him until the moment Huon recovers his free will and stops listening to concoctions of the Gériaume variety is not so much a literary device as it is a faithful echo of the mentality of twelfthcentury people who could no longer distinguish elves from dwarfs.

What are the relations that exist between Aubéron, the various Alberîchs, the elves, and the sprites? They are all aquatic creatures, even if the poets in the German-speaking realm no longer knew this—as from early on they consistently conflated dwarfs with elves. However, in the fourteenth century,

Hans Vintler noted in a survey of the beliefs of his contemporaries: “Many folk believe that the elf loves humans.”[45]

If Aubéron is called a dwarf, it is because the major portion of his personality is borrowed from German traditions that, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, systematically called all the small creatures of lower mythology *zwerge*. Following their lead, the author of *Huon de Bordeaux* used the term he found there for his own purposes. It so happens that Aubéron is an elf, which is to say a creature that is etymologically connected with water. We are therefore able to say this: the dwarf is an ill-intentioned “twisted creature”; the elf/sprite is beneficial and beautiful. But “elf ” and “sprite” were supplanted by the term “dwarf” and would no longer be used except in texts depicting fantastic, aquatic personages. However, a surveying of the folk tales shows that the sprite maintained a solid presence in the traditions and appears, at least in France, more frequently than the dwarf.[46]

With these points clarified, we can now take a look at what distortions, amalgamations, and shifts have made dwarfs and elves veritable syntheses of the majority of the creatures found in the lower mythology.

PART THREE

THE EVOLUTION OF BELIEFS AND SURVIVALS

8

THE DEMONIZATION OF ELVES AND DWARFS

Contrary to dwarfs, elves enjoy a cult following, and people believe in their existence and powers. This is clear, if we refer back to the old spells of execration like the one handed down by the "Curse of Busla" in the *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* (Saga of Bósi and Herrauð). Bósi, Busla's adopted son, is scheduled for execution. This woman versed in the magic arts goes before King Hringr and asks him for clemency and speaks the following curse:

May trolls and elves
And the Norn witches,
The souls of the haunted places
And the giants of the mountains
Burn down your hall …[1]

It is clear that the beings invoked here are reputed to have great powers at their disposal. Dwarfs are not mentioned, which suggests that they were less powerful, which would be expected since the elves lived by the side of the gods.

Closely tied to ancestor worship and associated with the Third Function and fertility rites, elves occupied an important place in pagan beliefs. They were at the very heart of the Germanic paganism that the Church had so much trouble uprooting. Conversely, the dangerous and malevolent dwarfs are rarely evoked and even more rarely invoked, which raises a legitimate question as to why. A diachronic study of our textual evidence reveals that the clerics had scant concern for dwarfs, whereas they directed their attacks against elves and reduced them to the status of dwarfs and demons by making them into harmful and pernicious creatures. In other words, they reversed the original beliefs. By systematically presenting the elves as dangerous beings, they shook that faith men had in them. By contrast, attacking dwarfs was unnecessary since they were not the subject of any cultic worship.

The decline of the elves, who once lived alongside the Æsir and took part in the sacred, is obvious if we examine the lexicon of the Germanic languages.

THE LESSONS OF THE LEXICON

It is in England that we see the first signs of the decline of the elves, whose name was emptied of its content. Now an empty shell, the word only carried notions of supernatural beings and spirits, which is really no cause for surprise. The country had been Christian since the seventh century: Pope Gregory the Great had sent Augustine there in 595 or in the spring of 596, and after the conversion of King Æthelberht, the new faith was established. The texts I use for reference here are primarily learned works, the translation of the works of classical antiquity into Old English.

The term *ælf-* enters into the formation of compound words intended to render Latin terms. Hamadryads and nymphs were transformed this way into "wood-elves" and "water-elves"; the rustic muses were changed into "land-elves"; the Oreads became the "hill-elves" and "mountain-elves"; and the Naiads were called "sea-elves."[2] This technique of translation, or rather of glossing, stripped the elves of all their earlier specificity. Can we assume from these translations that rustic, woodland, and aquatic elves existed in earlier Anglo-Saxon culture? I do not think so, because over the course of the centuries that precede the earliest written evidence, the spirits and genies were specialized. This occurred in the same way as had once been true for the Greeks and Romans, who populated nature with a thousand creatures. Each one had its own name: the nixies and the nickers frolicked in the waves,[3] the "women of the woods" haunted the forests, and giants hid in the mountains. The simple fact that Old English presents a whole series of words composed from *aelf*is suspect and tends to show that this term has lost all its earlier specificity.

However, here and there we come across an ambiguous piece of evidence. For example, what value should we give to the fact that the plural *nymphae,* "nymphs, water spirits," is sometimes quite plainly rendered by *ælfinne,* "elves" in the feminine plural?

Parallel to the degradation of elves into spirits is the phenomenon of their demonization. This is carried out by the associating of elves with other

extremely malevolent creatures. *Beowulf,* the famous epic that has come down to us in a tenth-century manuscript, but which echoes much older traditions, gives us a good example of this demonization. The anonymous poet explains the origin of the monster called Grendel in the following way:

> Cain slew Abel and God punished him by banishing him far from men; "from him are born all monsters, the ogres (*eotenas*), the elves, the evil spirits, and the giants (*gigontas*)."[4]

It is therefore unsurprising to see that a nightmare in Old English is called "the malefice of the Elf," and to find that elves in charms are almost always associated with night spirits and devils.

Let us now turn our attention to the German-speaking lands. Our evidence is more recent and dates at the earliest from the end of the eleventh century. However, these texts display the same phenomenon we find in Britain: the elf is a faun or a sprite, an incubus or a nightmare, and even a *lemur* (troublesome ghost).[5]

Such are the revelations of the language, and they contradict the personal names coined from the determinant *elf/alp.* At what time did these personal names cease to be seen as having a connection to the sacred? No one can say with any precision. It is likely that people continued to give them out without any longer perceiving their original connotations—a bit like how today it has been forgotten that the first name "Claude" carries the idea of claudication (limping), or how in the sixteenth century individuals who were not necessarily born feet first were also named *Agrippa.* One thing, however, is certain: the "elf-based" names have their origin in the time period that precedes the demonization of elves, which allows us to assert that this demonization clearly came about in the wake of Christianization.

ELVES, DWARFS, ILLNESSES

The people of the Middle Ages held certain citizens of the lower mythology responsible for the afflictions that beset living beings, and according to texts from before the year 1000, they impartially attributed them to elves, dwarfs, revenants, and trolls, and later to witches. This hodgepodge is less peculiar than it appears. For the clerics to whom we owe our evidence, all these creatures were demons or minions of Satan. They reduced all of them to a single common denominator, malevolence, and even paganism—which for Christians both amount to the same thing. In fact, the conflation of illnesses with these various creatures is relatively recent and difficult to

disentangle.

Elves are linked to madness and epilepsy. In Old English, for example, a madman and epileptic was simply called “elfy” (*ylfig*) and the mentally ill individual was quite simply called “dwarf” (*dweorg*).[6] A remnant of this sense lingers in modern German in the adjective *überzwerch*, which literally means “crosswise, athwart” and more figuratively, “unpleasant, hostile.” We may note, incidentally, that epilepsy is a disease whose origin was, in ancient times, attributed to the dead.

According to terms that were used until the recent past in folk medicine to designate certain illnesses, also attributed to elves were afflictions such as hives (Norwegian *elveblest,* Icelandic *álfarbrúnni*), colic (Danish *alvskot*), rosacea (German *Elffeuer*), and the staggers in sheep (German *Elbe*). To designate the individuals afflicted by the elves, the Danish employ a specific term: *elleskudt,* meaning “struck by the shot of an elf.” In today’s German regions, lumbago is referred to as “witch’s shot” (*Hexenschuß*), but in earlier times it was called “elf-shot” (*Alpschuß*).

The oldest attestions we have come from England and date from the tenth century. Two collections of medical prescriptions, the *Læcebok* and the *Lacnunga,*[7] which offer a curious blend of pharmacological codex translations, medicine from classical antiquity, and indigenous Anglo-Saxon elements, present a total of seven sections in which elves and dwarfs are closely connected to diseases whose names are unintelligible today but can be translated as “illness of the elves,” “suction of the elves” (a term similar to the latter also appears in Medieval German), and “illness of the water elf ” (which is perhaps a reflection of the belief we’ve been casting light on throughout this study; namely, that the original element of the elves is water). But in the tenth century, “elf ” was a generic term, which calls for caution on how it is to be interpreted.

The remedies offered here are extraordinary. To protect someone against “the elfin race, nocturnal goblin visitor, and for the women with whom the devil hath carnal commerce,” it is necessary to make an herbal salve and rub it on the forehead and eyes, which should dispel all diabolical or elfin illusion (*praestigium, phantasma, illusio*); if a person is suffering physically and not mentally, it is necessary to cense them with incense (it is well known that fumigations dispel spirits) and to make the sign of the cross over them frequently.[8] Against the “elf disease,” it is necessary to have bishopwort, fennel, lupin, the lower part of enchanters nightshade [an unidentified plant],

moss or lichen from the sign of Christ, incense, and holy water, and among other things to know the *Credo* and the *Paternoster*.[9] These and other prescriptions make it possible to see that illness is brought on by internal or external possession. The elf or the dwarf either visits you or hurls itself onto you. Describing the behavior of an asthmatic, the anonymous compiler of the *Læcebok* says: "at times he writheth as if he were troubled by a dwarf."[10]

Another attack, in fact the most common one, is a wound. These creatures have the habit of firing shots at man and beast alike. "If a horse or other neat [farm animal] be elf shot, take sorrel seed and Scottish wax, let a man sing twelve masses over it, and put holy water on the horse, or on whatsoever neat it be, have the worts always with you."[11]

But these invisible arrows are also shot by dwarfs (*dvergscot*), witches (*hægtessan gescot*, "hag's shot") and the Æsir (*esa gescot*). A very beautiful charm in Old English from before the year 1000 ends with these words:

If you were in the skin shot, or in flesh shot,
Or were in the blood shot, or were in bone shot,
Or were in limb shot, may your life never be torn apart,
If it were Æsir shot, or it were elves' shot,
or it were hag's shot, I will help you.
This is your remedy for Æsir shot, this is your remedy for elves' shot,
This is your remedy for hag's shot; I will help you.

The three verses that follow are obscure, as is any formula for magical protection (Ger. *Abwehrzauber*):

It fled there into the mountains… . no rest had it.[?]
Whole be you now! Lord help you![12]

The final way elves and dwarfs spread infection is through their breath: they blow in your face, which is reflected by the terms *alfpûste* (Middle High German) and *alvgust* (Danish). A fifteenth-century German charm sums up, in its own way, the means that these beings are assumed to use:

Elf with the hooked nose
I forbid you from blowing on my face!
I forbid you, elf, from smoking [?]
From creeping, from aspirating [sucking]!
Elf 's sons, demons,
Remove your claws from me![13]

We find this "breath" depicted in a romanticized fashion in the *Roman*

van Lancelot in Middle Dutch. Gawain meets a dwarf king who rules the land through which he is traveling and who has five hundred knights under his command. To give the hero a taste of his powers, the mysterious being blows in his face and reduces him to the size of a dwarf.

The Norwegian compound word *dvergslag*, "dwarf-strike," which may designate apoplexy, seems to indicate another method used by these creatures, but it finds practically no mention elsewhere unless we look to the romances of the Middle Ages. Quite often, a dwarf strikes a knight without rhyme or reason, and the authors present the scene as a manifestation of the fundamentally ill-intentioned character of some dwarfs. In my opinion, it would be a good idea to move beyond this level of interpretation and see this as a literary transcription of a folk belief, even if, for the requirements of the courtly romance, the dwarf uses a whip. Until now, the significance of this object, which seems to be the favorite weapon—or even, we're tempted to say, an attribute—of the dwarfs, has not been found. We should recall that Alberîch is armed with a whip in the *Nibelungenlied.*

Sucking, loosing an arrow, blowing, striking, hurling themselves on you, and possessing you are the methods elves and dwarfs use to make you sick. One single, thorny problem still remains to be solved: of whom are these acts characteristic? Elves? Dwarfs? Both? The arrow is not an intrinsic accessory for them since it is the Æsir, like witches, who are assumed to be talented archers. By using the revelations provided by etymology again as a guide, I can venture an answer: it should be something distinctly characteristic of dwarfs because the effects of the invisible wounds are always pernicious. Furthermore, if the isolated terms we find in the glosses appear in a context, they take on another dimension. Who, then, do we see dwarfs and elves associated with? The answer is all the creatures that the Church regarded as devils and pagan remnants. I would add one final remark: there is no charm that exclusively banishes an elf; when an elf is mentioned, it is always simultaneous along with other creatures from the lower mythology. Conversely, there is at least one, very old (tenth-century) Anglo-Saxon charm that solely concerns a dwarf, and I referred to it earlier in my discussion of Loki (see here). The dwarf in this spell is a spider that hurls itself on a person, knots its legs around his neck, and makes him sick. Finally, I would like to emphasize again that elves do not have a malevolent reputation in the mythological texts, and they are the subject of worship. I believe it is generally accepted that harmful beings are not worshipped, unless by a witch!

DWARFS AND THREADS

The dwarfs in folk tales, later called “goblins,” are often presented as those who tangle skeins and knot threads. This theme appears throughout the medieval West with a frequency and repetition that cannot be ignored by anyone who seeks to pierce the secrets of bygone days. The name of the spiderweb in Scandinavia, the “dwarf’s net,” shows that there is a trail to follow here.

The *Samsons saga fagra* (Saga of Samson the Fair), which perhaps dates from the fifteenth century and belongs to the family of texts called “Lying sagas” (*Lygisögur*) or “Fantastical sagas,” because they read openly like novels, recounts this:

> The giant Krapi had four daughters who handled the spindle perfectly. They were in the habit of stealing the wool of Skrymir, the king of the World of Giants (*Iötunheimr*). One day he captured the four young women [whom the author of the tale calls “elf-women” (*álfkonurnar*)] and they buy their freedom by making him a coat with wondrous properties: it is too short for adulterous women [here we can recognize the theme of the *mantel mautaillé*, which was also exploited by a French fabliau writer] and any thief who puts it on falls to the ground.[14]

What we should take note of here is the theme of the supernatural spinners. They cannot really be elves for two reasons. First, their father is a giant, and while a certain rapport exists between giants and dwarfs, no such relationship is attested between giants and elves. Second, Krapi’s daughters are thieves, and we have seen that it is the dwarfs who are typically robbers, not elves. As for the wondrous coat, it is ambiguous with both beneficial and malefic properties. Let me elaborate. It is beneficial in the sense that it makes it possible to recognize virtuous women and to denounce adulterous women, but this revelation is malefic because it brings about jealousy, discord, censure, and loss of honor. The coat is only genuinely beneficial when it paralyzes thieves. The anonymous twelfth-century French fabliau the *lai du Mantel mautaillé*,[15] which was followed by the Scandinavian writer, provided no origin for this piece of clothing, but our saga author has added it on, and his choice is revealing: he does not attribute the coat to fairies, but to women of the elfin race, who are in fact dwarfs. Thus, he postulates a link

between the dwarfs and needlework.

The most widespread theme is that of individuals bearing various names that tangle up the thread women have left on their spindle. In a report from the year 1135, Bishop Hugo of Mons describes the activity of a rapping spirit that he calls *faunus* (*sic*) and emphasizes the disorder he introduced into the sewing work:

> He twisted around a stool placed near the hearth the threads that Amica, the wife of Nicolas, had prepared with great care to make the cloth, making thousands of diversions and *tangled knots* impossible to undo. When day returned, the many people who came were astonished that such a thing could be done, and they all stated that such interlacing could not be the work of a human.[16]

We cannot help but compare this with what was said about Loki, the inventor of the fishing net, and with the name of the spiderweb, "Loki's net." Furthermore, I would like to point out that in Shetland, "Loki's string" (*Lokis lains*) indicates a bad piece of wool that cannot be spun.[17]

Hugo of Mons's text can support two interpretations. The tangling of the thread seems due to a mischievous spirit, who, in the folk tales, acts in two different ways: he either finishes the work that was set aside by the spinners before going to bed, or else vandalizes it, especially during certain nights of the year—Christmas or Epiphany, for example—when the spinners are supposed to halt all work. These actions are commonly attributed to household spirits.

In my opinion, it is necessary to distinguish, in all the narratives of this sort, the good spirits (who are invisible and helpful auxiliaries and work to do good) from the evil spirits (who systematically do the opposite of the good spirits and create disorder and chaos). By the time of the Middle Ages, all the possible agents of such activity had become commingled, and what we read in the texts is the result of that conflation.

Let us consider another example.

The Bishop of Paris, William of Auvergne (1180–1249), devoted several passages of his *De Universo* to spirits and fairies, and he reports the following:

> Evil spirits indulge in other mystifying activities … sometimes, also in the stables, wax lanterns appear from which seem to drip drops of wax in the manes and on the necks of horses; the manes of the horses are meticulously braided. … [18]

This passage deserves mention because it confirms the existence of the link that we have perceived between some aquatic spirits and the horse (see here). Furthermore, the beings that William does not name with any precision are invisible, like the figure whose intrusion into the home of Nicolas is described by Hugo of Mons, and who is revealed to be, later in that narrative, his deceased brother. We remain in the midst of a coherent theme in which the dead, dwarfs, elves, horses, and water are associated.

DECEPTIVE AND WICKED ELVES

Starting in the second half of the twelfth century, the elf began appearing in a guise that was very different from the meaning of its name. It remained a marginal figure in the literature, but the rare texts it furtively passes through are nevertheless evidence of its existence in oral traditions.[19] In the *Roman de Troie* (ca. 1165), Herbort von Fritzlar has one of his figures say: "I believe the elves are fooling me." A short time later, Heinrich von Morungen (died 1222), one of the great German *Minnesänger, opens one of his poems with the line: "More than one man has been enchanted by the elves."*

Konrad von Würzburg (died 1287) allows us to get a clear sense of what the elf represented around 1260–1270. In *Partenopier und Meliur,* his translation/adaptation of the *Partonopeus de Blois,* a French romance built on a Melusine-related theme and which can be regarded as the medieval form of Apuleius's story of Cupid and Psyche, we find this scene:

> Guided by invisible boatmen, the ship carrying Partenopier landed at the foot of the Castle of Meliur (an extremely rationalized fairy). The hero sets off in search of her and sees not a living soul in the palace. He finds a well-stocked table and eats there, served by invisible hands, and resumes his exploration. He ends up in a chamber and goes to sleep in a bed that seems to be waiting for him there. In the middle of the night, Meliur joins him there and says, to dispel his fright: "Milord, you are imagining that you are being deceived by an elf or demon because I remain invisible to you."[20]

This testimony fits right in with the words of Herbort von Fritzlar and Heinrich von Morungen: elves are likened to demons or to an evil spell of some sort. This malefic character that was attributed to them thereafter may explain the near total silence surrounding them—until the beginning of the

twentieth century, the elf was seen as a dangerous creature! From the collections of superstitions and documents of sorcery trials, here is one example:

> On your way, elf and she-elf, dwarf and she-dwarf, toward above and toward below, make your way to the home of So-and-So; tease his legs, taste his flesh, drink his blood, and sink into the ground, in all the devils' name.[21]

To banish elves, spells of this sort must be used:

> I conjure you, elf, you who has eyes like a calf, a back like a kneading trough [humpbacked], tell me where the house of your master is![22]

Or this:

> You elves, sit firm, don't shun your nest! You elves, move along, be gone soon to some other place!

A charm against *holdichen*, or elfish agents of disease, states:

> *Alle in und alle ut! So spricht die jungfrau sente Gertrud (All in and all out! So says virgin Saint Gertrude!)*[23]

In the fifteenth century, elves no longer belonged to the same world as dwarfs who, for their part, switched over into the world of legend. In the superstitions of this time, elves emerge at the side of all the night spirits, as this following incantation confirms:

May the supreme numen divinum,
May the holy sanctus spiritus,
May the salus sanctus dominus
Protect me again this night
From the evil folk who prowl the night …
Those who straddle the hedges [= witches] …
Wild hunt and members of your retinue
Who carry wheels and ropes,
Dead who have been wheeled and hung,
Leave this place!
Elf and elf-child,
Do not stay here any longer!
Sister and father of elves,
Leave, cross over the hedge![24]

Through a strange turnabout of position, the dwarfs became good folk, friendly helpers, and devoted servants, but this is not their true nature—it is

that of the elves before their demonization, and of the household spirits. At least since the thirteenth century, the dwarfs were transformed into the equivalent of *lares* and *penates* [Roman household gods],[25] usurping duties that were not originally theirs, and the culmination of this transformation, the fruit of this slow evolution and shift, is the grotesque dwarf or gnome that can be seen in today's gardens. What we have there is the modern representation of the household spirits of times gone by. This creature, which today is made from terracotta or earthenware, is the final manifestation of the Roman *Sylvanus sanctus*, the protector of the property boundaries,[26] and its presence consecrates the space as sacred. Though it is no longer common knowledge today, during the Middle Ages the enclosure in which an invisible spirit or place-spirit lived was considered to be sacred. The animal raised in this space was also considered sacred, and when it was slaughtered and eaten for the Winter Solstice feast at *Jöl* (Yuletide), it was also called a "sacrifice to the elves" (*álfablót*), and the animal was also dedicated to the god Freyr—what a coincidence! Freyr, we will recall, is the master of the World of Elves (*Álfheimr*) and prosperity. Once again, we see that everything is connected, which clearly shows that the structures and function have survived all the distortions. Outer forms may change, but not the inner depths.

THE ELF AND THE NIGHTMARE

In Old High German "elf" (*Alp*) designates the nightmare, and today it is called "elf pressure" (*Alpdruck*) or "Elfin dream" (*Alptraum*). In fact, the elf and the entity that the Germanic peoples called *mar* (masculine and feminine in all the Germanic dialects), were originally two distinct figures. Let us take a moment to look at how their conflation came about. For the sake of convenience, I will use the noun *Mahr* (pl. *Mahren*), which we also find in the French word for nightmare (*cauchemar*).

Cauchemar was a late entry into the French lexicon, only appearing at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and it is generally accepted that it was coined from the Middle Dutch *mare*, which had the meaning of "ghost,"[27] plus the modifier *cauche-*, for which two etymons[28] are thought plausible: the Latin *calcare*, "trample, press," or *calceare*, "put on (shoes, boots, etc.)."[*18] The form *cauche* would have resulted from the crossing of the Old French *chaucher* and the Picard *cauquer*. Before the sixteenth century, the French

called the nightmare *appesart,* a word related to the Italian *pesuarole,* the Spanish *pesadilla,* and the Portuguese *pesadela,* all derivatives of a verb meaning "to weigh." For Italo-Roman and Gallo-Roman dialects, Richard Riegler has shown that the *cauchemar* takes its name from verbs and nouns expressing notions of weight and oppression, as well as the idea of climbing or jumping on someone.[29] The *Mahr* in the Romance world is therefore a creature that assaults and presses its weight on you. Semantically it is therefore similar to the Greek word for "nightmare," *ephialtes,* literally meaning "one who jumps on top," and the Roman *incubus,* which means "one who sleeps on top." The notion of stamping, foreign to the Roman world, and which we see again in *cauche,* is borrowed from Germanic traditions. There, the nightmare treads on you (a very ancient theme), and then it straddles you. Incidentally, we may also note that in Middle Latin literature, the nightmare is called *phantasma,* a term that produced the word "phantom," a detail of some importance.

The first trace of a fusion of the elves and the *Mahren* can be found in the *Læcebok* (written ca. 950–1000), about which I spoke earlier, and in it we can read the following:

> Leechdoms [remedies] against every pagan charm and for a man with elfish tricks (*ælfsidenne*); that is to say, an enchantment for a sort of fever, and powder and drinks and salve, and if the disease be on neat cattle; and if the disease harm a man, or if a *mare* ride him and hurt him.[30]

This passage is obscure, yet we can see that the *mare* (= *Mahr*) is placed in the same category with the elves and understood to be the result of an evil spell.

The second testimony also dates from the tenth century, and it is due to the skald Þjóðólfr inn hvinverski and repeated by Snorri Sturluson in *Heimskringla:*

> But in the spring he left, and Drífa stayed behind, and he promised to come back after an interval of three years, but after ten years he had not come. Then Drífa sent for a witch (*sejðkona*) called Huld, and sent Vísburr, her son with Vanlandi, to Svíþjóð [Sweden]. Drífa paid Huld to transport Vanlandi to Lappland by magic, or else to kill him. And when the spell was cast, Vanlandi was at Uppsalir. Then he became eager to go to Lappland, but his friends and advisors forbade him and said that his enthusiasm must be caused by Lappish

> magic. Then he started to feel heavy with sleep [a typical reaction of a man whom a spirit is attacking or visiting], and lay down to sleep. And when he had been asleep for a short while he cried out and said that a *mare* was trampling him. His people rushed up and tried to help him. But as they held his head it trampled his legs so that they almost broke. When they held his feet it smothered his head so that he died.[31]

The magician is named Huld; as it happens, underground spirits, dwarfs, and elves in the Nordic legends are called the "people of Huld" (*huldafólk*). We might therefore recognize that the *mare* (= *Mahr*) is an elfin being obedient to Huld, or a dead person that the enchantress is using like a zombie. In fact, etymology has revealed that the Germanic *mar*goes back to an ancient Indo-European root, **mer*-, which refers to notions of dying.[32]

In the fourteenth century, the German fabliau *Irregang und Girregar* by Rüdiger von Munre shows that the *Mahr* and elves were confounded with one another:

> Two students spent the night at a peasant's cottage. One of them shared the bed of his host's daughter, got all he desired from her, they tried to go back to his own bed. He was led astray by the darkness and stretched out alongside the young girl's father. Believing that it was his companion, he told him of his good fortune. His host became angry, struck him, and tossed him out of the bed. His wife woke up when she heard the noise and hearing the story her husband told her, told him: "Don't lose your head, hang on to it! The *Mahr* was riding you, an elfin thing. You must drive this malicious creature away with the sign of the cross."[33]

In this time period, the Mahr was therefore part of the family of spirits that humans called "elves," which is confirmed by a charm from the beginning of the fifteenth century: "Mother of Elf, *Trute*, and *Mahr*, go out by the roof!"[34]

Trute is a synonym for Mahr, but it is used in southern Germany and northern Italy.[*19] The term "elf " has therefore become a collective name, a generic term encompassing all the harmful spirits of the night. It is now opposed to "dwarf," also a collective term, which designates other small creatures of folk beliefs who in this case are beneficial. Between roughly the ninth and thirteenth centuries, there was a character reversal: the good creature, the elf, to whom propitiatory rites had been addressed, became

malevolent, while the formerly harmful being, the dwarf, was transformed into a sympathetic and benevolent individual of the sort that we often encounter in the tales and legends.

How did the conflation of the elf with the *Mahr* take place?

It was encouraged by two sets of factors. First, there was the proximity of these two beings with death. In the case of the elf, this came about, among other things, by way of the *Jöl* holiday, with its celebration of fertility rites and commemorations of the dead—the deceased who were more or less confused for these creatures, as this holiday is also called "sacrifice to the elves" (*álfablót*). Next, there was the association with magic, spells, and illusion: elves are reputed to be wizards to some extent, and the *Mahr* seems to be understood as a personification of their evil spells. But originally the *Mahr* was a wicked dead individual, and for persuasive evidence of this, here is a twelfth-century anecdote taken from William of Newbury's *Historia Rerum Anglicarum:*

> After his decease, a man was buried with the diligent care of his wife and close relatives as according to custom [this detail is of some importance, as it shows the dead man had no reason to come back]. The night following his burial, the dead man entered his wife's chamber, woke her up, and crushed her with his weight, which she could barely tolerate (*importabili sui pondere superjacto*).[35]

This dead man behaves strictly like a nightmare, which precisely confirms the revelations of etymology, according to which the *Mahr* was primarily a dead person.

By an extraordinary coincidence—the secret of which lies with the folk traditions—the confusion between elf, dwarf, and *Mahr* has left behind enduring traces until a recent era. In a remarkable study titled *De Lutins en cauchemars* (On Sprites in Nightmares), Christian Abry and the late Charles Joisten have assembled an amazing dossier.[36] Seeking to pierce the secret of the *chaufaton*, the name of a household sprite that appears in the beliefs of the upper Aulps Valley (Haute Savoie), these two researchers have put together texts and testimonies from which it emerges that this figure maintains close connections with domestic animals and agricultural-pastoral production, hence with the Third Function. The *chaufaton* is helpful, but also sly and sensitive, and has a strong aversion to sharp objects, which is probably a way of expressing a very old idea—spirits cannot tolerate iron. Like all good sprites of the romances, it braids the hair of horses' manes,

makes light of people, and sleeps in haylofts, where it can be heard laughing. It is also a trampling spirit, treading on the men and women asleep in the hay, an innkeeper, or children. Sometimes it behaves like the *Mahr*:

> Other times, when two or three of them were asleep in the straw, the *chaufaton* would come press on them and paralyze them beneath an extremely heavy weight, as if they had a stone on top of them, one after the other [the *chaufaton* tramples all of them, except the hay].[37]

Abry and Joisten draw out two major functional axes of sprites: their domesticity and their incubus nature, which is to say, that of a nightmare and a trampler. And they wonder: "It can be asked if the role of the nightmare is not always filled by 'casual workers.'" In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, yes, this is clearly the impression that comes out of the texts, but during the Middle Ages, the question does not arise: in the Germanic lands, at least, there is the *Mahr;* then it coexists with the elf (*alp*) before being eliminated by the latter. I believe that folk traditions retain the memory of ancient times; in fact, I find it quite significant that it would specifically be a household spirit, the *chaufaton*, that can play the role of nightmare, because spirits like this often assume the form of the good deceased ancestor, and their cult of worship is confused with that of the benevolent, tutelary dead. But the *Mahr* is an evil dead individual. Starting from the time when ancestor worship fell out of fashion, in which it was no longer known that this oppressing *Mahr* is a dead person—and thus starting from the time in which the *Mahr* has been confounded with the spirits, genies, and the dwarfs—the figure that survives under whatever name in folklore is syncretic, born from the fusion of disparate and even contradictory elements, but shows a remarkable consistency on the functional plane.

These are the broad lines of the decline of the elves, in which they were interpreted *ad malam partem* and confounded with the dwarfs proper, and with the *Mahren*. "Elf" became the generic name for dreaded creatures and the adjective the Germans coined from it (*elbisch*) is used today to designate the fantastic beings encountered in medieval literature and, more recently, in folktales and legends. "Elf" connotes the notions of the disquieting marvelous and supernatural. The same holds true in England where the term "elf-struck" means "enchanted, bewitched." Yet in Iceland elves are still sometimes called *liuflingar,* meaning "dear friends."

Even the morphology of the elves has not remained intact. For example, in Denmark, they resemble old men, and on the Faroe Islands they are figures

of large size (!) with black hair, dressed in gray.

One thing is certain: dwarfs and elves are not solely literary motifs—people believed in their existence, and dwarfs were especially dreaded, since no sacrifice could sway them. Then, after the conflation of the dwarfs with the elves, the elves and their evil spells were feared. This is what becomes evident in Gériaume's attitude when he warns Huon de Bordeaux. I would like to add one final detail: in Norse folk traditions, the terms "dwarf-shot," "elf-shot," or "troll-shot" refer to the little pieces of bone (splinters) that are found in the meat of slaughtered animals, which is to say that these splinters have been interpreted to be as the arrow tips of these creatures.

Other mysterious personnages were labeled "dwarfs" and "elves." We have enough information about some of these figures to present them in the next chapter, which will allow us to illustrate the extraordinary complexity of the world of folk beliefs, to better appreciate the upheavals these creatures have experienced through their historical evolution, and to see how they survived.

THE SURVIVORS OF PAGAN LEGENDS

Duses, Sprites, Kobolds, and Howlers

What remains of the ancient beliefs regarding dwarfs? Everything that was just the stuff of romantic fairyland has definitely disappeared into the domain of quaint fictional works that can certainly serve as sources of amusement and recreation for our children, or inspire them to dream, but these stories are no longer anchored in reality. No one believes in these creatures anymore, except in a few remote and isolated places: science and progress have done their work. What was still preserved until the nineteenth century was the "genetic link," we might say, connecting these creatures to the Third Function and to death, and thus to the beliefs that are rooted in ancestor worship, which was the keystone of Western paganism if we judge the latter on the basis of the body of Germanic traditions. We shall now examine several aspects of these survivals.

THE DUSE

Certain creatures of the lower mythology have survived into modern times, despite the attacks to which they were subject from Christianity, and later from the rationalists of the Enlightenment. Certainly they have changed over time, but this transformation affected the outer forms more than it did the inner depths.

In Armorican Brittany there are sprites called *duz, tuz,* or *teuz,* and in the diminutive form, *tuzik.* In the Bernese Jura, they are called *duses* or *hairodes,* this latter term most likely a corruption of *Herodiade,* who is, according to the clerics of the Middle Ages, one of the leaders of the hosts of the night.[*20]

The *duses* are sometimes black, hairy, and fairly wicked, an obvious trace of their demonization—but their mores are also sometimes kindly and good.[1] These creatures appear in Wallonia with the name *dûhon,* but there they are only fossils that have left some trace in the place-names. For example, near Renardstein, on the banks of the river Warche, there is a *Trô dès Dûhons.*[2] In England, these creatures have vanished completely, and only a lone expression preserves their memory: *Go to the deuce!,* which means "go to the devil!" In the Grisons (Romansh Switzerland), their name is found behind *dischöl,* the nightmare of the Alps. The *duses* have not existed in Germany since a very long time, but three place-names—two from the eighth century and one from the tenth century—clearly prove that they were part of folk traditions.[3]

Researchers have acknowledged that the duse is nothing other than the Gallic *dusius* about which Saint Augustine (354–430) spoke in his *City of God* (XV, 23):

> There is, too, a very general rumor, which many have verified by their own experience, or which trustworthy persons who have heard the experience of others corroborate, that sylvans and fauns, who are commonly called "incubi," had often made wicked assaults upon women, and satisfied their lust upon them; and that certain devils, called Duses by the Gauls, are constantly attempting and effecting this impurity is so generally affirmed, that it were impudent to deny it.[4]

This is the first mention of the duses in history. Saint Augustine likens them to the spirits of the fields and forests, the manifestations of ancient minor Roman deities—*faun-us,* etymologically speaking, is the equivalent of Pan—and he demonizes them by merging them with incubi and by making them lecherous demons. Around 630, the Bishop Isidore of Seville, (one of the "founders of the Middle Ages," to borrow Jacques Fontaine's expression), accentuated the connection, but Pans and Furry Ones (*pilosi*) replaced the woodland beings and fauns.[5] The later medieval scholarly texts merely repeat the words of Augustine and Isidore without contributing any additional details.[6] In the eighth century, Papias, the compiler of the *Liber Glossarum,* confuses duses and fauns, and fifty years later, Hincmar of Reims (circa 806–882) again incorporates the duse with the incubus. So just what is the duse?

*Dusius comes from the Indo-European root *dheuos-/*dhus-,* which is

also that of “god” (*theos, deus*). In Sanskrit, the closest term to this root means “demon,” a meaning that we find likewise in the Westphalian *dûs*. In the early Middle Ages, *dus*-appeared in England in the form *-tesse* in the compound word *haegtesse*, and in that of *-zussa* (Old High German) in *hagazussa*.[7] These two Germanic terms are feminine, and they are used to gloss “Erynies, Eumenides, Furies, Parcae, pythonesses,” and “daughters of the night.” In the thirteenth century, the term is attested in the Netherlands in the form *haghedisse*, which has the meaning of “witch.” We will have to wait for the Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré (1201–1272), who paid close attention to oral traditions and folk beliefs and was a censurer of the errors of rural paganism, to discover what the duse is:

> The duses, or the dusions/dusians, are demons to whom the pagans of antiquity consecrated the sacred groves. The pagans of Prussia have sacred groves they dare not enter. They enter them only when they wish to make sacrifices to their gods. These are the demons that Saint Augustine speaks about.[8]

The duses are therefore—still at that time and in a region where Christianity only had a superficial hold, or else, to use the expression of the missionaries of the day, a time of “mixed faith”—the gods of the sacred grove (Latin *lucus*), which explains why Augustine, Isidore, and their successors conflated them with the woodland beings and the fauns. We will soon see just how small the world is!

In Old English, the *lucus* is called *hæg*, and in Old High German, *hag*, terms serving as modifiers in the compound words cited earlier. *Haeg/hag derive from the Proto-Indo-European root *kagh-/*kagio-*from which comes the German *Hain*, “sacred wood.” *Hægtesse* and *hagazussa* therefore confirm the accuracy of Thomas of Cantimpré’s testimony, but these are feminine nouns. Everything indicates that the *dusius* was endowed with a consort of the opposite sex, *dusia.* Such a phenomenon is, after all, quite commonplace in the mythologies; it is vouched for by *faunus* and *incubus*, who have as consorts *fauna* and *incuba*. *Hægtesse/hagazussa* therefore mean “the dusesse of the sacred grove,” a point I will clarify further.

Initially a god of the *lucus*, the duse became a guardian spirit. **Hag* is the equivalent of the Gaulish *caium*, “enclosure,” and the Welsh *cae*, which has the same meaning. The glosses also show that *hag* possessed this meaning from around the ninth to the eleventh century. The term is given for Latin lexical terms meaning “enclosure, palisade, embankment” (meaning, in fact,

“property boundaries”) and “enclosed pasture.” At one time *hag* served to designate a marked-off space inside a forest. All this makes the duse not just the deity of the *lucus*, but also the spirit of the enclosed space, of the estate, which is normal, as the *lucus* is always located within the confines of that space. The duse is therefore the equivalent of the *Sylvanus sanctus* or *Orientalis*, a god that protects the boundaries of the farm.[9] But the *Sylvanus* is threefold—domestic, pastoral, and tutelary—hence its confusion with other rustic and woodland spirits, and hence its assimilation with household spirits. In fact, the three type of *Sylvanus* (*domesticus*, *agrestis*, *orientalis*) seem to have merged into a single entity that nevertheless retained all three functions. Incidentally, I would like to point that the Roman *Sylvanus* was often integrated with, and acculturated, autochthonous deities whose names are lost; for example, a water spirit connected to hot springs is called *Sylvanus calaedicus* and *caldouledico*.[10] Our *Sylvanus* is also sometimes accompanied by the epithets *silvester* and *viator*.[11] As we can see, this is a very complex figure, whose name conceals a great many remnants of more or less Romanized indigenous beliefs.

Allow me to widen the perspective a bit. The goddess of the hedge became the witch (German *Hexe*), and it so happens that this figure is also called “Hedge-rider,” or “Hedge-straddler” (Middle High German *zûnreiterin*, Old Norse *túnriða*), a name that can be found already in the *Poetic Edda*. The explanation of this name is simple: the hedge is a sacred space, as it is placed beneath the aegis of a god. It stops the harmful spirits, who are unable to cross through the hedge and hide there while waiting for the chance to perform their dark deeds, keeping watch for the right moment when they can burst into the enclosed space. In Sweden, when a child was ill at night, his or her mother would bake a loaf of bread that she placed in the hedge while telling the Children of the Earth (*Jordbarn*): “This is for you; do not turn yourself toward us.”[12] By straddling the hedge, the witch made contact with these demons (this represents a Christian perspective resulting from the demonization of women practicing magic and divination) or with the guardian spirit. In the nineteenth century, again in Sweden, the witch would go to the sabbath riding a stake from the fence.

The dwarfs were conflated with the fauns. (Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentis septentrionalibus,* Rome, 1555.)

Deemed from the start by the entire clerical literature as a relative of the fauns and *sylvani*, of the pans and *pilosi*, the duse became a dwarf because all these terms were regularly glossed by “dwarf” in the vernacular. We can detect this same phenomenon in two regions quite distant from one another—Armorica and Germany—and must concede that the scholarly and clerical literature played a major role here in the history of the duse, because Christianity is the sole link that can be perceived between two such faraway lands. The starting point for the transformation of the duse into a dwarf, for the transition from the rank of god to that of demon, is Saint Augustine’s text, which Jacques Le Goff has recognized with his typical insight as “the birth certificate of the incubi demons of the Middle Ages.”[13]

THE SPRITE

If we open Paul Sébillot’s book on the folklore of France, we will be struck by the number of sprites that haunt our folk traditions. They are everywhere—in the woods, the waters, the caves, and the fields. They can be encountered in all our provincial regions, easily recognized by their mischievous and impish nature, and their ability to change form at will. In the

French vernacular the name of this being known as a *lutin* also survives in the verb *lutiner*, meaning “to tease, to torment.”

As we saw earlier, the first reports that have come down to us date from the twelfth century, but outside of literature proper, we gain a different impression. Circa 1211–1220, Gervase of Tilbury informs us that the sprites (*neptuni*, *portuni*) are demons or beings whose nature is secret and unknown, and who get along with the simple country folk, attending their vigils and helping them perform their domestic tasks. Once the doors have been shut, they go near the fire to get warm and pull small frogs from their pockets, which they eat after roasting them over the coals. They look old with wrinkled faces and are small in size, no larger than half an inch. They speed up the household chores and carry heavy objects much more easily than men. It is in their nature to be helpful and not cause harm, although this does not prevent them from sometimes playing tricks on humans.[14] This description corresponds precisely with what much more recent Germanic tales say about the household spirits who are particularly numerous in Scandinavia, where they bear more than a dozen different names.

In the thirteenth century, a German fabliau provides us with an additional detail on sprites that are called *schretel* here:

> A Norwegian accompanied by a bear stopped at a peasant’s house to spend the night, but the home was haunted by a sprite who was described this way: he barely measured three hand spans, possessed extraordinary strength, wore a red cap, and had the habit of turning furniture and utensils upside down. He left his hiding place in the middle of the night and went toward the fire to get warm. He spied the bear sleeping near the fire, hit it, and a rough-and-tumble fight ensued. In the morning the sprite went to the peasant to tell him he was leaving and would not come back as long as that large cat (the bear) was in the house.[15]

It is easy to underscore the many points of agreement between this story and that of Gervase of Tilbury, because they reflect beliefs that were not confined within national borders.

Nobody at present has been able to explain in a fully satisfying way the origin and significance of the cap, which over time became an intrinsic feature of the dwarfs. This motif is quite peculiar and brings to mind the hooded spirits (*genii cucullati*), figures that are widespread across Europe. They have been found, in the form of a statuette depicting a child wrapped in

a hooded cape, in all parts of the Gallic domain, in the Danube basin, in Germany, and in England. This kind of spirit is also carved on two altars discovered near Klangenfurt in Carinthia (Austria). Jan de Vries rightly establishes this figure's connection with the Third Function and death, noting:

> Vestments that almost completely cover a figure are one of the typical attributes of beings that belong to the lower world.[16]

This cap can also be seen on the head of members of the Wild Hunt, and in an *exemplum* by the Dominican Étienne of Bourbon (1180–1261), one of the riders of the *Mesnie Hellequin* turns to one of his companions and asks: "Does this cap suit me?" (*sedet mihi bene capucium*).[17] This question has no connection with the thread of the narrative, and Phillipe Ménard suggests it may be a ritual phrase.[18] It seems logical to add it to the dossier of the *genius cucullatus*, as it should have a connection with dwarfs and sprites. Unfortunately, we have no concrete evidence to support this hypothesis, but I am inclined to think, mainly on the basis of archaeological discoveries, that the caps of sprites, and later of dwarfs, come from this direction.

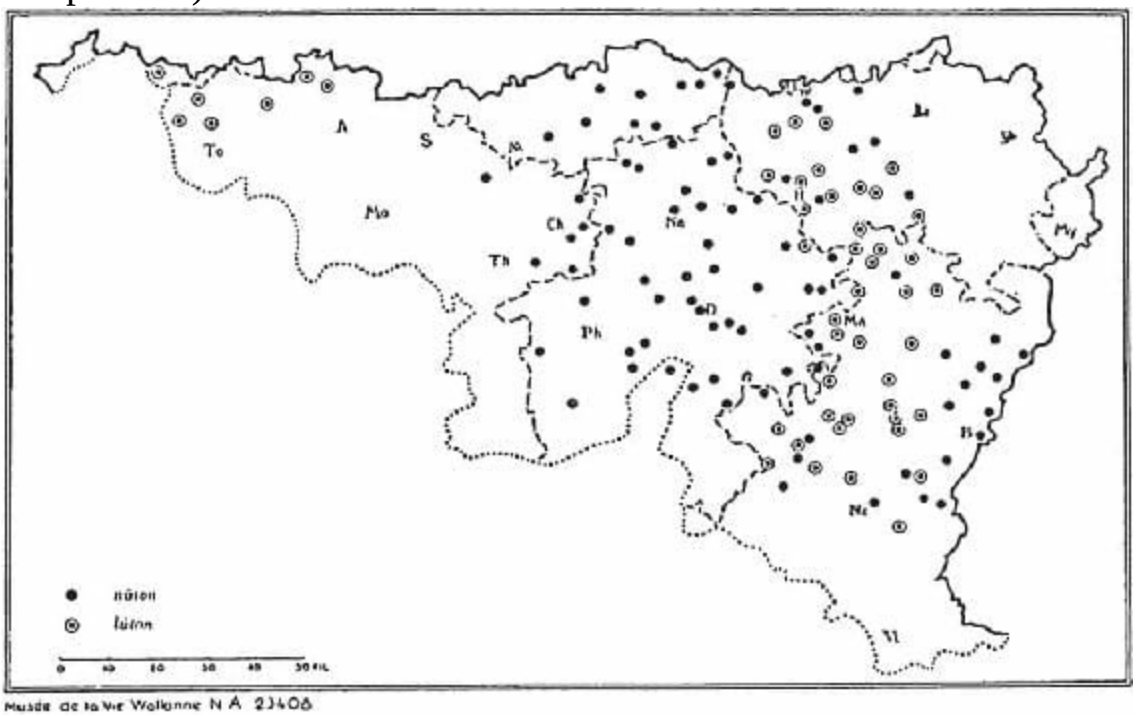
Philologists recognize that the word *lutin* comes from *Neptunus*, but does this then mean that the figure we find in the folk beliefs was imported from Rome? The question is worth considering, as it is always difficult to rediscover the local elements that are hidden beneath the *interpretatio romana*.

To have enjoyed such a level of popularity and to be so widespread, even in those areas where Roman influence was neglible, the sprite cannot be a simple import. It is a question of common sense: Roman traditions enjoyed great success and were perpetuated when they corresponded to the mental world of the peoples whom the Romans subjugated. *Neptunus* most likely came to overlay one or more of the small local deities, and Jean Markale has advanced the hypothesis that one of them could have been the god Nudd (variants: Nodons, Nuadu; objective case Nut[19]), who had connections with the element of water.[20]

In 1902, H. Schuermans drew attention to an extremely old inscription found in Celles, on the banks of the Lesse, a tributary of the Meuse.[21] A stone placed in the wall of the village church has an inscription that reads:

EX VOTO
NEVTTO
TAGAVSI

What this says is, “In fulfillment of a vow in honor of Neutto(n), Tagausias [or: Titus Agausius] has erected this altar willingly and with good cause.” So is this a case of homonymy or the first attestation of sprites (*nuitons, nutons*), or of the god that gave birth to them? It is difficult to say, but nevertheless quite curious to see the way in which the term *lûton* has persisted not far from the region where this quoted inscription can be read (see map above).



Nûtons and lûtons in Wallonia (linguistic border of 1930) following the dialectological investigation of Jean Haust (1924–1946). (Musée de la Vie wallonne, N.A. 23408.)

The results of the investigations of the dialectologists in Belgium should also be cited. *Nûton* is a widespread name in the toponymy and lexicon of Wallonia. It has taken on various figurative senses there: it designates a person of small size; a dark, taciturn man; or an unsociable, misanthropic, vigorous homebody.[22] Under the form *lûton* it is part of several very striking expressions: “to be trapped like a *lûton*” means to be bewitched; and “to be led by the *lûton*” means to have gone astray, to be scatterbrained, to be dogged by misfortune. The origins for these various senses can all be found in our dossier, sometimes in connection to dwarfs and sometimes in connection to elves.

I would like to point out an avenue for further research. In his *Saturnalia (XIX, 5), Macrobius (fifth century) refers to Neton, a deity* worshipped in

Hispania and Lusitania, and inscriptions dedicated to this figure have been found.[23] Is this name connected to our *nuitons/ nutons*? The investigation remains to be pursued.

THE KOBOLD

It has been customary to regard the German kobold as the equivalent of the Roman sprite. It is certain that the two beings share many points in common, and both have survived until very recently in folk traditions. Both have been household spirits at one time or another in the course of their existence. As the kobold has been the subject of extensive study, I will simply recall several points that are interesting with regard to our present subject.[24]

The oldest occurrence of the term can be found in the British glosses, in the form "*cofgodas,*" a term that translates *penates.* In the singular it means "god of the house, god of the room," but the plural usage shows that it concerns an undifferentiated type of entity.

In Germany, the term appears toward the twelfth century in the form *kobold,* coined from *kobe,* "room," and the verb *walten,* "to govern, to manage." During this time period, however, it did not designate a living member of the family of spirits, but a figure carved in wood or made from wax, and thus a kind of idol to which people made offerings of food at certain times of the year. The kobold is therefore connected to the Third Function. It is possible, although difficult to prove, that the titles of the *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*[*21] (eighth century) concerning "simulacra made from bread" and other "flour creations" allude to the ancestor of the kobold. This would be hardly surprising because, in the early Middle Ages, the clerical literature—penitentials and catechisms intended for the *rustici,* the country folk—makes allusions to similar propitiatory rites.

We do know that the kobold was fully conflated with dwarfs and that it even gave its name to the metal cobalt, since these creatures are alleged to rule over the underground world. Starting in the sixteenth century, a new name appeared in the German-speaking countries for dwarfs in the plural: *Bergleute,* "Miners."

The history of the kobold, which I have given here in extremely simplified form, is instructive. It allows us to grasp how the transition was

made from a reality, namely, domestic cultic activity that aimed to attract prosperity to the home, to the fabulous motifs of folktales. This was the fate of the majority of creatures of folk paganism. They left the domain of reality to enter the realm of fiction, but beyond all transformation, all invention, and all alteration into literature, they confirm the existence of a pre-or extra-Christian culture that long maintained its customs in the rural areas, and traces of which surface almost everywhere. Did these beings find their way into the literature of entertainment because people had begun viewing them with detachment and no longer believed in them? That is a possibility, but there is also another equally plausible explanation: the poets were able to make use of certain motifs from reality because they saw how they could turn them to their advantage. And might not the act of featuring them in fabulous, wondrous adventures be one means of eradicating the beliefs in these creatures, by suggesting to the public that they were merely fictional inventions? I am in favor of this explanation because it is based on a simple observation: in Germany, we almost only ever find the kobold portrayed in the folktales, not in high literature.

THE *GENIUS CATABULI*

The animal that is mentioned most frequently in connection with sprites and dwarfs (I am using the latter term here in the generic sense) is the horse, and the persistence of the motif suggests a very strong bond between horses and these individuals. Paul Sébillot notes: “Based on a belief that has been detected enough times to warrant consideration as being widespread, the dwelling of horses, and more rarely that of horned animals, is visited at night by fantastic figures, ordinarily small in size, who perform actions there that are sometimes benevolent, sometimes mischievous, and sometimes wicked.”[25] In Brittany, this dwarf or sprite is named Moestre Yan, Petit Jean, Boudic, or Bom Nox; in Saint-Suliac it is named Jetin; in the Dauphiné region, Folaton; and in Anjou, Pernette. It is called Sotré in the Meuse and the Vosges, although in this region it is ugly and deformed and has cloven hoofs—an obvious trace of its contamination by the morphology of satyrs and the influence exerted by scholarly traditions. In Lower Brittany, the Teuz-arpouliet (duse of the pond) takes care of animals. Most often, these creatures braid or tangle the manes and tails of horses. Furthermore, of all the animal shapes assumed by sprites, the horse is the most common: the Mourioche (Upper Brittany) resembles a mare, and the Pohr en Drow found near Carnac will toss any rider careless enough to climb on its back into the

sea. The Niss in Denmark also shares a close bond with the equine species.

We cannot avoid being surprised by the diffusion and recurrent nature of this belief. Dwarfs, and the beings akin to them, therefore belong to the family of this *Sylvanus*, the protector of horses and draft animals (*genius catabuli*), whose epigraphy confirms its existence in France, and we have seen that Sylvanus is often the Roman name of indigenous deities.[26] The link between dwarfs, sprites, and horses is not therefore an abstract theme but has great consistency and is centered around the various duties of Sylvanus, a deity who may have played the role of a magnet that drew together various indigenous traditions.

Up to this point, our investigation has shown that elves, sprites, and dwarfs—whatever their names may be elsewhere—fall under the rubric of the Third Function, which touches on death, water, and stones. What connection does the horse have here? It fits into the same function as a draft animal or beast of burden, but it is also the preeminent animal psychopomp, and its remains have been found in the tombs of our remote ancestors. In classical antiquity, the horse is the mount of Hades and of Poseidon, namely, a god of death and an aquatic deity! The horse is the most common shape assumed by water spirits: the Scottish *kelpi*, the Irish *pooka,* the Icelandic *nennir* and *vatnahestur,* and the *nykur* of the Faroe Islands. Is it not revealing to see that in the legend of Theodoric the Great, the Ostrogothic emperor vanishes in one of two ways: either by following a dwarf or by riding a horse that came from who knows where? In the legend of King Herla, the British sovereign and his companions do not crumble into dust as long as they remain on their horses. It certainly appears that these horses were given to them by the dwarf that invited them to his wedding:

> Herla … set off laden … with horses… . The dwarf led them out of the darkness and offered Herla a small bloodhound, forbidding any of his companions from getting down on the ground, under any pretext, before the dog jumped down from his bearer.[27]

We can see that Herla and his men left the dwarf's kingdom riding the mounts they had been given.

Nor should we forget that the Irish *pooka* and the Scottish *phuka* are simultaneously horses, sprites, and even the dead. In ancient Germanic literature, the *pûca* (Old Norse *púki,* "devil"; Old English, Old Irish *púca,* "kobold"; also Frisian *puk* and Low German *puge*) is sometimes a revenant. And here is a coincidence: in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Shakespeare

places a certain Puck near Oberon! Ten place-names confirm the existence of this figure in Britain, with the oldest dating from 772 and the most recent, 1312. As for the Faroese *nykur*, which typically has the form of a horse, its name shares the same root as “nixie.”

Through use of the comparative method and all the resources of philology, we have managed to identify the complexes of representations and to reveal their kinships, as well as to discover certain aspects of the mentality of humans in older times, and to explain the shifts and substitutions of beliefs that occurred, but we are unable to proceed further. It seems that the spirit world is characterized by its indistinctness, its multiform nature, wherein the same role can be played by a sprite or by a horse, by a dwarf or by an equine creature. In fact, the Third Function is represented by a myriad of creatures, so we must set aside the outer forms, for they are not pure. Let me repeat: the beings we are studying have a past that largely eludes us due to a dearth of evidence, and what we are able to grasp of them concerns forms that have already been contaminated.

At the center of all the beliefs relating to the Third Function, death is omnipresent, and all the rest are structured around this fundamental notion. Is it not suggestive that people in Norway once said every farm had its guardian spirit, called *gardsvor* (or *gardvord*), literally meaning “protector of the estate”? This belief takes on its full meaning when compared to a story told in this same country: a peasant offended a place-spirit (*genius loci*), and the narrator noted: “He should not have done that, because the *gardvord* is the spirit of the man who first cleared the spot where the house now stands.”[28]

With the Howler, this collusion between the dead, spirits, and dwarfs will be highlighted even more.

THE HOWLER (*SCHRAT*)[29]

French folklore has kept memories of figures, who are sometimes spirits, dwarfs, sprites, or revenants, whose principal characteristic is to utter cries or make noises. In this regard we have the *Braillards* (Bawlers) of the Island of Noirmoutier; the Monk of Saire, in Lower Normandy; the *Criard* (Shrill One) of Carteret; the *Lupeux* of Berry; the *Crieur* (Howler) of Maine and Anjou; and elsewhere the *Huyeux*, and the “Woodland Weepers.” Two things immediately grab our attention: first of all, these individuals most often bear names expressing their primary activity, which makes it possible to definitively identify them. Secondly, they are unclassifiable, as they straddle

several domains and clearly deserve the name of “spirits” (as vague as that may be), for they assume the shapes of various creatures from the lower mythology. All the individuals mentioned above are, in one way or another, akin to a figure that is well known in Germany, the *Schrat* (or in the diminutive, *Schrättel*), which etymologically means “the Howler.” It made only fleeting appearances in the Germanic regions during the Middle Ages, but enough to show that it existed and was fully alive at the margins of the literature. We essentially find it in the collections of the glosses and in the lexicons, which provide us with a dense amount of information. Without going into the “technical” details, here is the story of this creature as I have been able to reconstruct it. It deserves a moment of our attention, for it is exemplary, illustrating again and again the phenomena of semantic shift, juxtaposition, and conflation, which are a distinctive feature of living folk traditions that have not yet been fossilized, codified, and turned into literature.

If we make a synthesis of the Germanic-language glosses, the Howler’s character is threefold and organized around three major axes or registers that relate to death, tutelary spirits, and dwarfs, respectively.

With regard to the first, death, the name *scrat* (Howler) translates the conception of the wicked dead individual and revenant (*larva*, *monstrum*)—definitions to which were added, during the ninth and tenth century, the notion of “mask” (*masca,* a term that also means “witch”) and *thalamaska.* This latter term is extremely revealing about the profound nature of the Howler. Thanks to Hincmar of Reims (died 882) we know that *thalamasca* designates a kind of mask that was worn in masquerades that took place on the anniversaries of the dead.[30]

In tenth-century England, *scrætte* (which would become Middle English *scrat[te],* “sprite”) is given for “necromancy, revenant” and “ghost,” and a century later, the meaning of nightmare (*ephialtes*) was added. This confirms the continental Germanic testimonies from the same era, which make this entity an incubus or succubus, a spirit that hurls itself on its victims.

In the eleventh century, the Howler was, on both sides of the English Channel, a sorcerer practicing black magic, *nigromancia* (a corruption of *necromancia*, “divination using the dead”), and the Howler practices illusion and charms.

The elements of this first register justify the presence in folklore of Howlers who are merely those who died prematurely—individuals who were

murdered or killed accidentally—in short, the categories of the dead slated to become revenants, those that are still referred to in some places as the "returning dead." Until a recent era, the *Schrat* was regarded in Germany as a child that died before being baptized or a dead individual in the family who behaved like a nightmare toward his close relatives—the coincidence is glaring![31] This meaning is also vouched for in the fifteenth century when the poet Hans Vintler wrote: "Many folk believe that the *Schrat* is a little child, quick as the wind, and a soul in torment."[32] This connection of the *Schrat*/Howler and the dead reemerges in a curious superstition observed in Carinthia. There the *Schrat* is the name of the woodworm, and it is nicknamed "dead man's hammer" because hearing it means the hour of one's death is imminent.[33]

Let's move now to the second register, that of tutelary spirits.

In the glosses, *Schrat* is sometimes defined as an "evil *Lar*," which is to say, an evil household spirit—as it happens the *Lares* are also, as is well known, the good dead that have been elevated to the rank of guardian deities. If we retain the lesson of the only text in which the *Schrat* occupies center stage, *Der schretel und der wazzerbär* (The Little *Schrat* and the Polar Bear; thirteenth century), we will see that it has the traits of a sprite, a pixie living in a peasant home. I provided this description earlier (see here). But in 1460, Michael Beheim, repeating a widespread opinion of his contemporaries, said: "Many folk believe that every house has its own little *Schrat* who brings fortune and enhances the prestige of all who hold him in honor."[34]

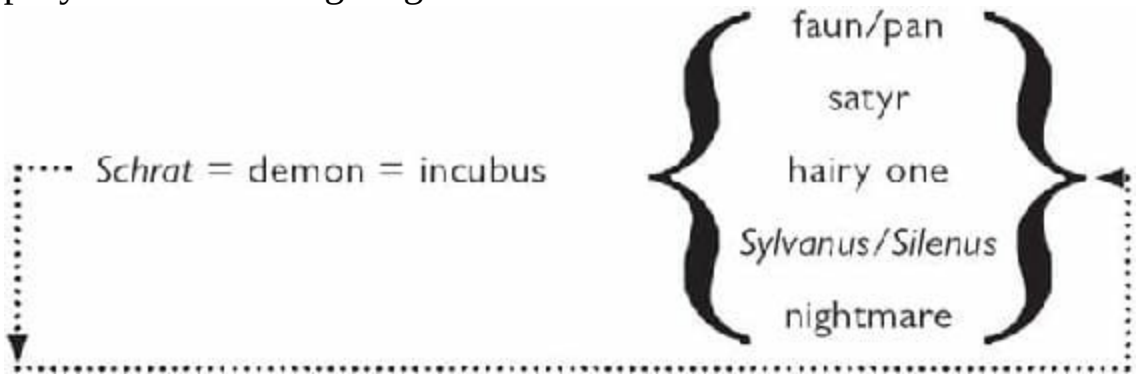
Could this be any clearer? In 1482, a Latin-German vocabulary translated *penates* as *schrat.* The protective and domestic nature of this individual is well established.

Let us now consider the final register, that of dwarfs.

Between the ninth and twelfth centuries, *Schrat* was given as translation for "faun, incubus, *Pilosus*, monster/revenant, 'man of the woods' [perhaps this is an equivalent of the wild man]," "Silenus," and "satyr." In an eleventh-century document, it is even synonymous with *alp*, meaning "elf, nightmare." The words *faunus* and *satyrus* are also rendered by the compound word *waltschrat*, the "Howler of the Woods." In folk tales, our friend is only a kind of dwarf.

We must admit that it is surprising that one single individual could play so many different roles, with different facets—dead person, simulacrum of the deceased, rustic or woodland spirit, sorcerer, nightmare—but if we look

closer, only the final register really deals with the whole picture. In fact, the dead and household spirits went hand in hand in later medieval beliefs, which is not surprising, as people were buried by their own homes for a very long time.[35] We should therefore avoid being misled by the negative epithets that the clerics use in their commentaries. They can be explained by the demonization of the *Schrat*—a demonization that has endured all the way up to the present, as in England, the devil is still called Old Scratch!—as well as by the interplay of semantic shifts and improper matchings that we can simplify in the following diagram:



From one matching to the next, the *Schrat* metamorphosed into a relative of the dwarfs.

All the problems are not resolved, and we still need to show that during the Middle Ages the Latin terms *faunus* and so forth did not necessarily have the same meaning that they possessed in Roman times, which are the ones that are familiar to us. We have recently considered the influence of the Latin on the indigenous concept; now we will take a look at cases in which the influence goes in the opposite direction.

Around the year 1000, Burchard of Worms, who was German by birth but wrote in Latin, was in this way able to transpose the concepts of his native language into that of the clergymen when he formulated the criticisms he made of pagan superstitions, such as the following:

> You have made puerile bows and children's shoes, and you have tossed them either into your cellar, or into your attic, so that the satyrs and hairy ones could play in this very place and provide you with the property of others, which would have made you wealthier. …[36]

It is easy to see that what he is talking about is an offering made to the household spirit—the gift of shoes, for example, crops up again and again in many more recent Germanic legends—and these have no connection, obviously, with the satyrs and furry ones of the Roman traditions. The terms

satyrus and *pilosus* therefore overlay some notion, some other names, for which they are only an approximate translation. If the transposition was perfectly exact, Burchard would have used one word, not two. It so happens that in his day *Schrat* was the customary translation of *faunus*, *satyrus*, and *pilosus.*

What we have just seen in medieval Germany is also valid for France. Recounting the details of an event from before 1135, Hugo of Mons uses the word *faunus* for a being that behaves in the following way:

> He often made sport of the astounded and incredulous folk with shards of pottery or some other manner of disgusting object. Often, by throwing stones repeatedly and with herculean strength, he struck the roof and walls of the home and, without anyone seeing him, he moved from one place to another panels, cushions, platters, cups, and pitchers. He lit candles with a faraway flame and, while foods were cooking or when they were placed on the table, he snuck clumps of grain or disgusting ashes into the dishes.[37]

This is certainly not the behavior of a faun! Moreover, this creature is invisible and behaves like a sprite (mischievousness) and like a rapping spirit (stone throwing). The story continues:

> Priests were brought in who exorcised the home with the aid of holy water and banished the creature, who began to speak. He told them his name was Garnier and he was the owner of the house's brother. He went on to say: "Alas for me, as I have traveled from faraway lands through many dangers, I have suffered through storms, snow, and cold! How many fires have burned me and how much bad weather I suffered through to get here! Nicholas, my brother, my sister-in-law, my nephews, and other friends, fear naught, for the power to do harm to anyone has not been granted to me. However, protect your forehead and your heart with the sign of the cross because wicked troops, eager to do evil, have come with me and will leave when I leave. For me to abandon their pernicious path and fully enjoy eternal rest, have a mass celebrated tomorrow in honor of the Holy Ghost, and a second one, for the salvation of the faithful dead."

This is a marvelous text, an admirable reflection of the beliefs of yesteryear! The "faun" here is a revenant: throwing stones is one of the forms of language used by souls in purgatory, or by the dead that have no grave. This revenant also behaves like a sprite. There can be no doubt that *faunus* is

a completely inadequate translation and overlies some other conception, some other term from the vernacular language—but what might it be?

The figure of the faun in the Middle Ages has never been studied, so I would like to bring to your attention a strange legend recorded by the *Liber monstrorum* (Book of Monsters), the oldest manuscript of which dates from the ninth century:

> Fauns are born from worms who entered life between the bark and the sapwood; they then descend to the ground, grow wings, which they later lose and transform into men of the wood.[38]

The birth of these entities can be compared to that of the dwarfs of Germanic mythology who started off as larvae in the body of the giant, Ymir. I would like to add that the name *faunus*, like *satyrus*, is given to certain butterflies, as well as to some moths in the *Sphingidae* family, and the term *Schrat* is also used to designate butterflies and moths. One more mystery!

I could give other examples from medieval literature up to the sixteenth century—for instance, Gervase of Tilbury's sprites are portrayed as demons unafraid of holy water[39]—but I would like to draw the lesson from the examples already put forth. To express certain indigenous concepts, learned writers would use Latin, particularly by employing words that had been consecrated by tradition, represented by the glosses—words that had been perpetuated with a meaning that was only approximate. A substantial, initial discrepancy would be created between the local idioms and the Latin expression, a discrepancy that was further increased when the Latin terms themselves were adopted into the vernacular. This is a phenomenon that is well known to teachers of living languages today, as it becomes very apparent if we ask our students to translate a text they had already translated back into its original language. A comparison of the results gives a very clear sense of the distortions that are produced when moving constantly between one language and another, which is what occurred when moving between the oral vernacular and written Latin in the Middle Ages. I can illustrate this point with a modern example. To express the idea of dying, the French have the expression "*manger les pissenlits par la racine*" (eating dandelions from the roots), while the corresponding English expression is "pushing up daisies." In some way, the "faun" of our medieval texts would be the dandelion transformed into a daisy, or vice versa. It is only the basic idea that survives in a more or less recognizable form.

Knowledge of these linguistic details is important because it helps explain

many of the elements of recent folk traditions. Why are some dwarfs hairy, and why do they have horns (details that are absent in the Middle Ages, when the humpback of these beings was their most prevalent attribute)? Most likely, all these morphological details were borrowed from Roman depictions of satyrs and other small rustic deities. This is how an aspect that was little known in the Middle Ages gradually became sketched in, through the aggregation of scholarly and folk traditions.

ELFLAND

In his 1898 study of the kobold, Henning F. Feilberg concluded that "elves are the souls of generations long dead who continue to live around us and maintain relations with the living that are sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile, and the living join the elfin people when they die."[40] What survives of the dwarfs from a long ago past is essentially their kinship with the departed ancestors. In the nineteenth century, elves (by which I mean dwarfs, since a substitution had taken place) were regarded as the inhabitants of the realm beyond the grave. Sir Walter Scott cites a Scottish legend that is quite revealing in this regard:

> A weaver lost his wife. She died in convulsions and her corpse was so disfigured that the gossips of the neighborhood thought due to a lack of vigilance she must have been carried off by the elves and replaced by this body. When the weaver began seriously considering remarriage, his dead wife appeared one night and told him that she was not dead but a prisoner of the "Good Neighbors" (a euphemism designating dwarfs), and that he could, if he still loved her, bring her back from the dreary kingdom of Elfland. But the weaver did not do as the "ghost" asked.[41]

We should compare this story to another one that was collected in Denmark and shares a similar backstory:

> A peasant lost his wife; one evening as he was passing near an Elf Mound (*Ellehöj*), he saw his wife dancing with other people. Because he called her by name, she was compelled to follow him, but their life was never what it was: his wife wept constantly in the kitchen.[42]

Even if the narratives differ in the detail—in the first, the wife asks for help to return to the land of the living; in the second, she regrets being forced

to return there—they reflect the notion that people go to the kingdom of the elves when they die. This belief was noted as early as the twelfth century, although elves were not mentioned. Walter Map relates the following event, which took place around 1180:

> A knight of Little Brittany had lost his wife long before. One night he found her in a deserted valley, in the middle of a crowd of women. Overcoming his fear and astonishment, he grabbed her and brought her back to his home. Both went on to live many years together and had children. Their descendants are called "the sons of the dead woman."

Walter Map ended his story with these words: "This adventure would seem incredible and prodigious if the descendants did not provide manifest proof of its authenticity with their presence."[43]

Who were the inhabitants of Elfland—dwarfs or elves? In the story told by Sir Walter Scott, they were obviously dwarfs: the dead woman is unhappy and longs to leave this world where she is held against her will. In the Danish narrative, by contrast, the peasant's wife acts as if she had lost paradise. Only the anecdote reported by Walter Map is neutral: the wife is dead and seems to be living a pleasant life beyond the grave, but expresses no regret when she leaves it. It seems to be the case that this country, designated as Elfland or as the Elf Mound, received, depending on time and place, a population of elves or dwarfs, which is justifiable, since these two types of creature are regularly confused.

I am certain that a systematic examination of the folklore of various parts of Europe would show evidence of many other survivals, but in order to find out whether they are genuine survivals or simply reminiscences, we must base our efforts on an inventory of medieval traditions and on as exact as possible a definition of the concepts used by the clerics and the poets. The examples that I have given of the extent of the semantic field for certain terms show the results that can be achieved through a philological analysis combined with other disciplines. It is thanks to this kind of multidisciplinary approach, which might be likened to the labor of a mosaicist, that we can lift a corner of the veil that obscures the past of the mysterious creatures who form part of the realities of the Middle Ages, and, therefore, part of our own history.

ONCE UPON A TIME ...

They Existed Because We Believed

We have now reached the end of this essay—albeit an imperfect one, because a multidisciplinary approach has its limitations—in which I have attempted to present elves and dwarfs in the medieval West through several cultures that display some disconcerting kinships. I must still briefly sum up the results of our investigation, while acknowledging that the subject is far from exhausted, but with the hope that I have raised some fundamental questions, even if I was not able to resolve them all.

Although today we rarely know them as anything more than literary stereotypes and the clichés of tales and legends, elves and dwarfs are in fact remnants of paganism and figures that were once part of the reality of beliefs. These creatures represent a crystallization of scattered beliefs that all share one point in common: they closely relate to the Dumézilian Third Function, to notions of fertility and fecundity, and therefore to the figures that are alleged to have the power to bestow them: the dead. Dwarfs and elves have thus become good or evil spirits, bringing luck or misfortune. They also know how to unleash storms, but while the latter cause damage, they are also beneficial and encourage germination. This example illustrates the fundamental ambiguity of the beings I have drawn out from the shadows.

In mythology, we must clearly distinguish the elves proper from the dwarfs proper. The elves have their place next to the gods, whereas the dwarfs do not, although they still play an important role, as they craft the attributes of the members of the pantheons. Syncretic figures that we grasp in the course of their evolution, elves and dwarfs were confused in the minds and writings of the men of the Middle Ages, which makes their identification so difficult and entices us to think that, at origin, there may have been a single personage that was divided into two individuals—one beneficial and beautiful, the other malevolent and ugly. We cannot rule out this idea entirely, although it is impossible to prove given the current state of research.

I have been able to draw out the main features that make up the skeletal structure of beliefs surrounding the elves and dwarfs. These beliefs are oriented toward the Third Function in Dumézil’s tripartite model, and a series of oppositions that include water and stone, air and earth. These main features and associations can be summarized in two sequences:

elf—water—sun—day—kindness;
dwarf—stone—moon—night—wickedness

These two sequences essentially reflect two major aspects of the dead in their relations with humans. The good dead become fertile humus and go to a paradise from where they will watch over their descendants as guardian spirits; the evil dead continue to haunt the stones and wander the subterranean world, threatening the lives and health of humans.

Aubéron embodies these notions. It is still necessary to first perceive them in the traditions in order to see to what extent the little king of Faery may represent their literary transcription. Only the death theme remains obscure in this figure, but we can sense it behind his custom-made immortality.

Through Aubéron's recuperation by literature, we can glimpse the fate that befell various folk traditions: they have been adapted to suit the subject matter of the stories, fused together with other themes and with other motifs, but their intrinsic characteristics have survived. For examples of such survivals, we need only look to the relationship "dwarfs" have with craftsmanship, metals, and prosperity; or their evil spells, magical powers, and the consequences inherent in meeting one.

Dwarfs have vanished. This is because, several tales and legends tell us, they could not stand the sign of the cross and the sound of church bells, and because men did not treat them as well as before. I might add too that, because they were connected essentially to agriculture and husbandry, they lost their reason to live under our skies and in our lands where famine is no longer a threat, animals are less exposed to epidemics, and harvesting and threshing have been mechanized. All the services that dwarfs could provide are now performed with equal effectiveness by machines—but with ever so much less poetry. Dwarfs, elves, and their kin fell victim to technical progress and changes of habitat: they belong to the rural countryside and not to the gigantic metropolises of today. They live in wild nature, beneath the stones, not asphalt, and near the hearth, not the space heater! They abandoned our imaginations at the same time we moved away from our roots and ancestral worship fell into disrepair. But along with them, we lost a little of the past of our elders. Never again will we be offended by the mischievousness of sprites. All these creatures have returned to the world whence they came, returned close to the gods or beneath the stones, but have they forgotten the Golden Age? They lived because humans believed in them, and they were extinguished along with that same belief.

Once upon a time there were elves and dwarfs; it was long, long ago… .

AFTERWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

ASSESSMENT OF THE RESEARCH

Since 1988, the dwarfs and elves of the Middle Ages have not been the subject of any particular studies. Studies have essentially focused on other creatures related to dwarfs and conflated with them over the course of the centuries. The contours and specific features of each kind of supernatural being have been blurred to such an extent that we thus no longer always know who is who.

Concentrating on “recent” folk traditions, but still taking the diachronic perspective into consideration, Erika Lindig has examined household spirits, analyzing their names and forms—human, animal, inanimate (objects)—and describing their supernatural powers, their integration into the family with whom they have chosen to cohabitate, the taboos that affect them, and the way they come into a home and how they are expelled from it.[1]

In an inspiring ethnological study that exhaustively shows the entrenchment that beliefs in household spirits have held in the mind, Dagmar Linhart deals with this same topic but confines her phenomenological investigation to Franconia.[2] She confirms the results of Erika Lindig’s research and focuses her attention on the duties of these spirits as overseers of the estate, guarantors of order, providers of prosperity and good fortune, agrarian workers, and so forth. She shows how they avenge themselves when offended, what their rewards are, and how they disappeared: they were proscribed, the noise of church bells and the murmur of prayers drove them away, and they could not tolerate foul language. She astutely compares the kobold, bearer of one thousand and one names, to the dwarf and even to the water spirits and the “Women of the Wood,” indirectly revealing the bonds that exist between the household spirits and the land spirits.

For my part, I have devoted a book to the demons and spirits of the land,[3] who in medieval literature were often called “dwarfs,” and emphasized the relationship they maintain with ancestor worship and death, a point confirmed by Lindig and Linhart. I have also shown the mental background of the rites for taking ownership of a piece of land and the building sacrifices, and I have suggested means for discovering and identifying the *genii loci* concealed in the romance narratives. Furthermore, I translated and published several Medieval Latin texts dealing with the creatures that were assimilated with dwarfs and elves, and I have established that a close relationship existed between them and the dead.[4]

The Scandinavian realm, more precisely Norway, is the subject of an excellent thesis on trolls by Virginie Amilien.[5] While *in illo tempore* these creatures were horrific giants, they are now only known in the folklore as dwarfs. Sagaciously gathering, classifying, and analyzing a body of five hundred texts, Amilien confirms the durability of the medieval beliefs presented in my book, and a comparison of her corpus with mine raises the question of substrata and transmission. She orients her study around several simple but fundamental questions: What did these beings look like? Since when have they been haunting nature? What roles do they play? Why are they so important? Among other things, this allows her to tease out the close relationship between trolls and revenants. We should note that all the researchers I have cited thus far have come to the same conclusion: dwarfs are quite often the dead, and the same is true of household spirits and place-spirits.

Alice Joisten and Christian Abry are responsible for another important work using the corpus of works on the fantastic beings of the Alps put together by Charles Joisten over the course of his fieldwork during the years 1951–1976.[6] They show the inextricable tangle of traditions that combine and merge before separating anew, all while bequeathing and preserving traces of contamination coming from the creatures with which dwarfs have been associated. Here again, the names of the dwarfs are ecotypes, and the kinship of these figures with fairies and household spirits is glaringly obvious. We are able to round off the materials presented with the survey by Olivier de Marliave, which focuses on the region of the Pyrenees.[7] What emerges from all these works is that the belief in dwarfs is considerably consistent among all the countries of western and northern Europe; the same should hold true for Central Europe, but the relevant research there is little known elsewhere

because the studies are rarely written in a widely spoken language.

A very handsome, richly illustrated tome on dwarfs in art (painting, engraving, sculpture) was published in 1994. It catalogs and reproduces the bulk of the known iconographic evidence that relates, for the most part, to the creatures of small size that actually lived.[8] Accompanied by scholarly articles on the medical explanations for dwarfism, the psychology of dwarfs, African pygmies, and dwarfs in fairy tales, the book deserves attention, even though its aims are quite different from our own. I should also point out Massimo Izzi's fine dictionary of monsters and mythological creatures because it offers an important bibliography that makes it possible to see the connections between dwarfs, sprites, fairies, and giants.[9]

Robert Wildhaber has examined the changeling (*Wechselbalg*), a being incorporated with dwarfs, and has provided an exhaustive study of the riddle attached to this figure based on a large corpus of tales and legends.[10] Otto Blehr's area of interest is folk beliefs,[11] and he has observed that some dwarfs (*nisse*) are only linked to farms, whereas revenants, fairies, and the woman of the forest (*huldra*) appear in the alpine summer pastures, woodsheds, and the woods. Finally, we can consult the book by Wil Huygen and Rien Poortvliet, which is aimed at a popular audience.[12]

Several detailed points have been tackled in scholarly articles: Ronald Grambo has studied the theme of abduction by supernatural beings, dwarfs, and "mountain dwellers,"[13] Reidar Thoralf Christiansen that of the young girl promised to a troll,[14] and Gilles Eckard on the horn of Aubéron.[15] In her thesis, Hyacinth Mdluli tackles the dwarfs in the romances by Chrétien de Troyes, underscoring their connections with the otherworld and noting interesting parallels in the narrative traditions of southern Africa.[16] Finally, it is also worth mentioning a number of shorter studies by Alice Joisten and Christian Abry on supernatural beings because they extensively demonstrate that the term "dwarf" is susceptible to being applied to very different creatures.[17]

We have been reproached by critics for some of our etymologies. Arend Quak[18] questions my etymological analysis of *zwerc* (see here), without having read the study I made of it with the help of Yvon Desportes[19] (and which to the best of my knowledge has been repeated by many researchers, one of whom is Régis Boyer); Quak also seems to take issue with the etymology for *saiwala* (which I took from Josef Weisweiler), and those for

the swan maidens (see here), without suggesting any alternatives and without any argumentation. In the latest edition of Kluge's German etymological dictionary, Elmar Seebold notes Weisweiler's proposal and simply writes that the word *Seele* (soul) is of "obscure origin."[20] Frequently, hardcore philologists refuse to accept that the vocabulary of the beliefs does not necessarily follow the regular rules of linguistic development established by the Neogrammarians, and on more than one occasion such words will remain enigmas if one refuses to take into account the phenomena of contamination and overlapping. My friend Ronald Grambo (Oslo) has criticized my comparison of *andi* with *animus/anima* (see here).[21] What I intended to say was that, on a mythical level, *andi* should indicate a vital principle that is roughly equivalent to *animus,* and this principle would be connected, through the name Andvari, to the aquatic domain that the latter being belongs to. On this point, I would refer to my study of the "soul" and its denomination,[22] while fully keeping in mind that etymology is merely an aid to research and the philological deductions should always be corroborated by the texts, because a word cannot be understood except with the help of its context. The other etymologies proposed for Andvari offer the sense of "cautious, wary" or "guardian," with this last definition perfectly suiting the role played by this dwarf: he was the guard of the treasure. But we can likely take this direction further if we keep this etymology and suggest that the first element, *and-*, is a term that is related to the Germanic **anilo and the Norse áli*, which mean "ancestor." In this case, Andvari would be the "guardian [of the treasure] of the ancestors." It is difficult to definitively determine this, as the dwarf's name could have undergone transformations that obliterated its original character, and quite possibly shifts of meaning took place, so this figure has retained a part of its mystery.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

See here. A curious passage from the chronicle written John von Viktring (1312–1418) associates dwarfs with the notion of guardian spirits connected to the sovereign of the country, an extremely old idea if ever there was one:[23]

> During the time [1335] of the reign of this prince [Henry, Duke of Carinthia] and in the regions subject to his authority, a people of dwarfs lived in the caves of the mountains. These dwarfs ate, drank, played, and danced with men, but remained invisible. They wrote letters and formed a community, had laws and a prince, and confessed

> to be Catholic[!] and entered the dwellings of men secretly, sitting near them and getting along familiarly with them. No one should take this for a lie because all of this was told to me as truth by Matthew, Bishop of Brixen, mentioned above and a venerable man—as well as by a large number of trustworthy people of both sexes, who, through experience, know a great deal about these dwarfs. However, once the prince died, no more was heard tell of them. It was said that they carried precious stones that made them invisible because they were ashamed of their small and misshapen bodies.[24]

The reader will taste the earthiness of this report, which is presented as the complete truth by relying on high ecclesiastical authority and the number of favorable testimonies. The explanation of the dwarf's invisibility fully conforms with the ideas of the time: the *midriosus* stone, for example, was supposed to confer invisibility.

- See here. On Alberîch/Andvari, their attributes, and their duty as guardians of the treasure in the *Nibelungenlied,* one can read the studies I have devoted to them recently.[25]
- See here and following. The theme of the dwarf smiths has been studied by Lotte Motz from a vast perspective that includes archaeology, tales, legends, and beliefs. She confirms and expands what I have written, especially on the connection between dwarfs and stones.[26]
- See here. The *Second Lucidaire,* written around 1313 and recently published by Doris Ruhe,[27] confirms the connection between dwarfs and the dead:

> And in regard to these dead and these spirits, and these sprites and several other visions that people say can be seen at night, they are often devils who assume the form of any dead man by feigning his voice for tempting the person of no sin, for as the psalmist says: *Spiritus vadens et non rediens,* which is to say that once the soul has left the body it goes to the place it deserves without ever returning until the Day of Judgment unless by a great miracle, like we read of the miserly and several others.
>
> But sprites, goblins, and helquins that are seen at night as armed

folk riding on horses in great assemblies, these are devils that are among us and reveal themselves in this form and in several other forms like a horse, a dog, a tree, a stone, and in other ways to tempt the man of no vice to go astray in his faith.

The anonymous author blends and conflates dwarfs (sprites, goblins) and helquins, which is to say members of the Wild Hunt, a troop of the damned who travel across the land on certain dates. He demonizes them but retains an essential element of the folk beliefs: the ability these beings possess to adopt various shapes; this is something also noted by Dagmar Linhart in her study that I mentioned earlier.

- See here. Pursuing my research on the "reality" of belief in dwarfs, I have discovered, while dealing with another topic, that many more charms and incantations existed than I had realized.[28] In tenth-century England, there are dozens of charms for protecting oneself against the illnesses sent by elves. The recipes combine plants, prayers, and masses while relying on magic spells. I again saw that *leodrun,* "spell," had the synonym *ælfsiden,* "elf-magic." One charm says this:

  Against every evil witch and against elvish tricks write this writing in Greek letters:

  + + A + + O + ŷ + i F B y M +++++ B e p p N N I K N E T T A N I

During the eleventh century, the saints Machutus and Victoricus were invoked:

1. Write this along the arms against a dwarf:

   + *t* + ω¯ Ā

   And rub celandine into ale.

Sanctus Macutus, Sancte Victorici

2. Write this along the arms against a dwarf:

   + t + P + t + N + ω + t + UI + M + ω¯ Ā+

   And rub celandine into ale.

Sanctus Macutus, Sancte Victorici

Other spells:

1. Say this protection charm against dwarfs:

and thebal guttatim aurum et thus de.[*22]
+ albra Iesus + alabra Iesus + Galabra Iesus +
2. For protection against the dwarf write on three wafers:

T H E B A L G U T T A

- See here. Here is an early thirteenth-century testimony from Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia imperialia* on a variety of dwarfs that "the English call *portunes* and the French *neptunes* [= *lutins*]" (*Galli Neptunos, Angli Portunos nominant*):

> It belongs to their nature to take pleasure in the simplicity of happy peasants. When peasants stay up late at night for the sake of their domestic tasks, suddenly, though the doors are closed, they are there warming themselves at the fire and eating little frogs which they bring out of their pockets and roast on the coals. They have an aged appearance, and a wrinkled face; they are very small in stature, measuring less than half a thumb [*senili vultu, facie corrugate, statura pusili, dimidium pollis non habentes*], and they wear tiny rags sewn together. If there should be anything to be carried in the house or any heavy task to be done, they apply themselves quickly to the work, and accomplish it more quickly than it could be done by human means. It is a law of their nature that they can be useful but cannot do harm. However, they do have one way of being something of a nuisance: when on occasions Englishmen ride alone through the uncertain shadows of night, a *portune* sometimes attaches himself to the rider without being seen, and when he has accompanied him on his way for some time, there comes a moment when he seizes the reins and leads the horse into some nearby mud. While the horse wallows stuck in the mud, the *portune* goes off roaring with laughter [*Portunus exiens cachinnum facit*], and so with a trick of this kind he makes fun of human simplicity.[29]

The figures described here are first and foremost domestic dwarfs that fulfill the task of a supernatural helper; they perform difficult work. Their penchant for pranks is a constant that turns up repeatedly in the more recent

traditions in which they have a reputation for playing all kinds of tricks on humans. It will be noted that the physical portrait Gervase paints corresponds in every detail (except the beard) with that of the sprite of our folktales. As for the rags the *portunes* wear, they can be found in numerous legends: when the master of the house rewards the good and loyal services of the household spirits by offering him new clothes, the spirit will be devastated, as it is now obliged to leave the house.

Claude Sterckx has recently provided a more detailed view of the connection between the nuitons and the luitons, and he likens these figures to the Celtic gods Nuadha and Ludd. Sterckx also confirms the connection of these figures with the element of water.[30]

- See here. Roger Pinon has made an extremely well-documented study of the *dûhon* and the *dusius*, which is extremely revealing of the complexity of this figure, which represents a blend of various ancient remnants.[31] An important passage from *Malleus maleficarum* (Hammer of the Witches) written by the Inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, nevertheless escaped his notice.[32] Here it is, based on the French translation of Armand Danet, in which I have replaced the hardly appropriate "*lutin*" [sprite] with "Duse," based on the text of the first edition:[33]

> Satyrs and Fauns (which are commonly called Incubi) have shamelessly appeared to women, and have sought and obtained coitus with them. And that certain demons called Duse by the Gauls, ceaselessly attempt to achieve this vile act with women is vouched for by so many credible witnesses that it would seem impudent to deny it… . But it is not incredible that incubi exist.

The inquisitors liken and conflate Duses, Furry Ones (*pilosi*) and Satyrs by relying on a tradition that goes back to Saint Augustine and to Isidore of Seville, whose *Etymologies* (VIII, 11) they cite:

> Similarly, Saint Isidore says: incubi come to lay with, which is to say rape. They are often amorous of women and lay on them; [hence the frequent interpretation of the incubus as a nightmare]. Hence the Gauls named them Duses, because they often commit this vileness. But he who is commonly called Incubus, the Romans called a Fig

Faun (*faunus ficarius*).

It may be noted that the whole of the clerical literature and of the numerous vocabularies show evidence of the same assimilation.

- See here. The *Chronicle of Zimmern*, written around 1566–1567 and retracing the history of the counts of Zimmern, includes a long presentation on dwarfs that are called *erdenmendle* here, meaning the "dwarfs living in the earth," that is, underground. This text deserves our attention as it offers a global view of what was believed about dwarfs at the end of the Middle Ages, and presents them as household spirits, guardians of treasures, and also provides a reminder of the dangers they could represent. Here is a summary:

> In Clingel and Eberstein, little men called *erdenmendle* or even *wichtelmendle* appeared. They spoke with folk and performed all manner of tasks with kindness and loyalty. They inhabit all the lands of the German nation, and I heard much talk about them when I was young, but I was unable to learn who they were or what their nature and virtues were. People thought they were men who had been cursed and were awaiting redemption… . The very learned philosophers Belinus and Behencater and the ancient cabalists, making a distinction between the fallen angels, say that the *erdenmendle* committed a minor sin against their Lord and Creator [this is an allusion to the legend of the neutral angels] and were cast down to earth like the others, but they received a solid body (*corpus solidum*) and not one of air like the other spirits. They therefore have hopes of salvation, which is why they perform so many good deeds, visiting honest folk and helping them.
>
> One inhabitant of Rechberg had a spirit like this near him for years, who behaved like a servant and left him without dire consequences. A noble Bavarian, Endres Bucher, had one as well… .
>
> And also many years past, an *erdenmendle* showed itself in Antian-Zimmern and the surrounding area, and spoke with the peasants. In the woods above Scheurbronn, near the castle, they live in the mountain, especially near the spring on the same slope of the mountain. This spring is still called "fountain of the dwarfs." [Other

examples follow.]

> Once they dwelled on the banks of the Neckar where Rothenburg is. When one leaves there toward the Wecke Valley, one finds a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, the site of an important pilgrimage for years and years, and where miracles have occurred. A strange underground passage was found that was dug deep in the ground.[34]

A description of the subterranean passage follows this portion of the text. German researchers have compared it to the *Schrazellöcher*.

> A Freising weaver rewarded an *erdenmendle* for his services by offering him a pair of shoes and a black tunic, which the other gratefully accepted. A short time later, he gave him a red cap, which the other took reluctantly before vanishing, never to return.
>
> There are still dwarfs in Thuringia and Upper Lusace. Half a league from Heldrungen, the noise of hammers can be heard in the stables of Sachsenburg Castle, as if coins were being struck [this is reminscent of the theme of dwarf smiths].
>
> An old peasant of Werdenfels (Tyrol) had a son who met a dwarf in a castle. Invited to follow him, he entered the mountain where the dwarf gave old and unrecognizable gold coins, telling him to come back the next day but not to reveal anything to anyone. In this way he was able to add to his father's prosperity. One time, he remained away for three days and his father pressured him to reveal the reason for his absence, which he did after warning him that doing so would bring about his death in three days, but his father paid that no mind. The child fell ill and died on the day he foretold; the father lost his position shortly thereafter, became afflicted by gout, and died several years later.

These stories provide us with the necessary elements for drawing up a portrait of these dwarfs: they are small, measuring no more than a rod, and wear a beard, which is sometimes long and gray. The *Chronicle of Zimmern* marks an important stage in the recovery of medieval beliefs, which went from oral tradition into written works before being taken back by oral traditions. These medieval traditions were widespread and fed the traditions that were collected well up into the nineteenth century. For those who are interested and who wish to pursue their own research, I would like to point out that these nineteenth-century texts are extraordinarily rich since their authors were also acting as ethnographers.

- See here. Belief in dwarfs is also thoroughly confirmed by the archaeological studies conducted in Germany, Austria, and Moravia on the *Schrazellöcher,* which literally means "the holes of the *Schrate,*" also known as "the Howlers," a variety of dwarfs we examined earlier starting see here. In the southwestern part of the Upper Palatinate and in the Bavarian forest, there are a number of subterranean passages that were given the name *Schrazellöcher* in folk traditions. These passageways are attributed to dwarfs or fairies, and inscriptions that resemble runes and graffiti have been found on the walls of some of them. Here is a curious coincidence: the plan of these underground passages is somewhat reminiscent of that of a tomb in Alexandropol in southern Russia, which dates from the fourth or third century BCE.[35] The interpretation of these often labyrinthine underground passages as dwarf dwellings speaks volumes about the mentalities of days gone by. For many years now, an academic society led by Karl Schwarzfischer has been inventorying and systematically studying the *Schrazellöcher* and publishing a magazine called *Der Erdstall*.[36] Similar studies have been conducted in France by the *Société française d'Étude des Souterrains* (French Society for the Study of Underground Passages).[37]
- See here. In dictionaries and lexicons, the Howler (*Schrat*) had been assimilated with the nightmare since the latter third of the nineteenth century. We can read this in the Lexicon of Fritz Closener and Jacques Twinger of Königshofen:

Ep(h)ialtes: the kind of phantom that comes in dreams, with the sprites and crushes (you) (or presses on you).

incubus: *schröetzlin.*[38]

CLAUDE LECOUTEUX,
MARCH 1997

AFTERWORD TO THE FOURTH EDITION

Since the appearance of the latest edition of my study, several works have come out on dwarfs, both in France and in the German-speaking countries. Three figures have particularly captivated researchers: the sprite Zephyr in *The Romance of Perceforest*, and the dwarfs Tronc and Aubéron in *Ysaïe le Triste*.[1] In these studies, the emphasis is placed, among other things, on the transformations[2] of these creatures, which are compared to Merlin[3] and even Melusine.[4] Christine Ferlampin-Acher notes that "the sprite is not a figure that is as widespread in the twelfth-or thirteenth-century romances as the fairy, for example, or the dwarf. The *luiton* [sprite] adapts to the romance in verse because it is flexible and polysemous, but it is not inherent to the language of the romances, as are creatures called the fairy, the enchanter, or the seer. Thus, the sprite is a creature that is undergoing gestation in the romances and chansons de geste of the twelfth century, and it blossoms in the thirteenth century, at the same time the chanson de geste experiences a renewal, mainly by borrowing from the Arthurian romance."[5] Anne Martineau's brilliant thesis on sprites and dwarfs of French medieval literature,[6] only a part of which has been published,[7] offers a clear, precise exposition as well as a very useful catalog of the Arthurian dwarfs. Jean-Michel Doulet[8] has devoted his excellent thesis to changelings, those children that are substituted by dwarfs and fairies, tracing them from the Middle Ages into the nineteenth century, and I too have published a portion of my corpus on these creatures.[9] The reader will also find much material, including bibliographical information, in my *Encyclopedia of Norse and Germanic Folklore, Mythology, and Magic*.[10]

Two theses have been recently published in Germany. The one by Isabel Habicht[11] explores the background of the scenes involving dwarfs from a

corpus of about fifty medieval German and French texts consisting of romances and epics. This work is oriented toward literary analysis and shows that the adaptation of dwarfs to the narratives goes hand in hand with their rationalization, the elimination of everything connecting them to pagan beliefs, the removal of their powers, and their restriction to a few specific roles. They are therefore sometimes transformed into knights and adapted to courtly society, mainly through the erasure of their negative qualities, thereby enlisting them into the service of the Christian moral message.

The thesis Evgen[12] on the giants and dwarfs of the Germanic world unfortunately uses a regressive method. Using recent sources as his base, this researcher attempts to uncover the ancient mythic elements, which, in my opinion, represents a serious methodological mistake. Because of this, his demonstrations should be taken with the greatest precaution, as he completely ignores the French studies. Nevertheless, he supplies a good little dossier on Scandinavian changelings (see here).

Finally, the extremely original anthology of essays of Tarentul published by the Albert Marinus Foundation gathers together ten contributions that shed light on the prehistory and history of garden dwarfs.[13]

FOOTNOTES

*1 [Translated into English as *The Return of the Dead. —Trans.*]

*2 [Man as a wayfarer or pilgrim, journeying through the world(s). —*Ed*.]

†3 The scholarly author who tries to reach a wide audience is caught between a rock and a hard place: the experts criticize him for not covering this or that point, and for not citing this or that study, while other readers, to the contrary, find the book too "technical." The present work has no other ambition than to inform as many people as possible about dwarfs.

*4 [Lusitania was the name of the ancient Roman province in what is now Portugal. —*Trans.*]

*5 [Ankou is a personification of death in Breton mythology and folklore. —*Ed.*]

*6 [This is a reference to the influential analysis of ancient Indo-European religion and society by the French scholar Georges Dumézil (1898–1986), in which he discerned a pervasive trifunctional pattern. Basically speaking, the First Function is the domain of sovereignty and magic, the Second Function the domain of warfare and defense, and the Third Function the domain of production, agriculture, and fertility. —*Ed*.]

*7 [*Dormir sur ses deux oreilles* is a French expression that means to sleep soundly. —*Trans.*]

*8 [This is the Old French word *hanap*, meaning "drinking vessel, cup." —*Ed*.]

†9 [The name means "Proud One" —*Trans.*]

*10 Middle High German *tarnkappe* or *helkappe*.

*11 [Word roots that are preceded by an asterisk are hypothetical reconstructions based on the science of historical linguistics. —*Ed.*]

*12 If we can believe what the folk traditions collected in England at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century tell us, this kind of act is one performed by revenants in animal form: "When [the mission with which a revenant had entrusted him was accomplished], the tailor went to the agreed meeting place and made a great circle with a cross … and awaited the arrival of the same ghost. And at last the ghost came in the form of a goat, and went three times around the aforementioned circle [a magical act], saying 'Ah, ah, ah.'

Whereupon he fell prone on the ground, and rose up in the form of a man of great size, horrible and skinny." For more detail, see the account of "The Tailor and the Revenant" in my book *The Return of the Dead*, pp. 110–14.

*13 The exact phrase spoken by a revenant leaving Purgatory is: "*Non enim alicui nocere permissa est mihi potestas*" (I am not permitted the power to harm anyone); for the original text see my article "Vom Schrat zum Schrättel," 105–6.

*14 [This word can be variously translated as "sprite," "pixie," "imp," *etc. —Trans.*]

*15 [For more on this motif in Old Norse mythology and elsewhere, see the entry "Hjaðningavíg" in Lecouteux, *Encyclopedia of Norse and Germanic Folklore, Mythology, and Magic. —Ed.*]

*16 [In modern German, *Drudenfuss* ("Drude's foot"). —*Ed.*]

*17 I would like to remind readers that in Scandinavian petroglyphs, which are dated to the Bronze Age (1500–400 BCE), the horse and the solar boat alternately appear. Elsewhere, the sun is frequently depicted in a boat, and in Celtic regions, the skiff is even flanked by two swans. Furthermore, many countries share a belief that the sun dives into the water every evening to regenerate. It is easy to see from this that the water-sun combination has an origin stretching back to the dawn of time.

*18 In the Germanic north, the *Mahr* cannot tread on the sleeper until after the latter has slipped on his or her shoes, which is why it is recommended that they be placed by the headboard with the tips pointing out. This superstition could support an origin in *calceare.*

*19 In Parma, *alpha*, "elf," is used.

*20 [For more on this figure, see Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies of the Night*, 11–14. —*Ed.*]

*21 [The "Little Index of Superstitions and Paganisms" is a collection of Carolingian capitularies for identifying and routing out pagan beliefs and customs. Only a table of contents containing chapter titles has been preserved of the document. —*Ed.*]

*22 This phrase is from the Bible, Isaiah 60:6.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION. THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF TRADITION

1. Cf. the introduction in Ruelle, ed., *Huon de Bordeaux,* 68.

2. Cf. Fink, *Naissance et Apogée du conte merveilleux en Allemagne (1740–1800).*

3. Poirion, *Le Merveilleux au Moyen Âge,* 100.

4. Grimm, *Irische Elfenmärchen,* 219–23, afterword by K. Sandkühler.

5. On this two-tiered cultural situation, see Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge,* chapter 3 ("Culture savante et culture populaire"), 223–79, especially his analysis of the dragon of Saint Marcel. On the methodological problems involved, see Schmitt, "Les Traditions folkloriques dans la culture médiévale," with bibliographical references.

6. Because the first edition of this book was finished in December 1986, studies published after that date were not used. Some of them appear in the afterwords and bibliography.

CHAPTER ONE. THE MEDIEVAL BELIEF IN PYGMIES AND DWARFS

1. Prior, ed., *L'Image du Monde de Maitre Gossouin,* 132.

2. Hesiod, fragment 42, ed. Lehrs.

3. Homer, *Iliad,* III, 3.

4. Herodotus, II, 33.

5. Original Greek text in Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* 103, col. 215–16.

6. Strabo, *Geography,* XV, 1, 5 (trans. Hamilton and Falconer).

7. Pliny, *Natural History,* VII, 2 (trans. Bostock).

8. Cf. Lecouteux, *Les Monstres dans la littérature allemande de Moyen Âge,* vol. I, 270ff.; vol. II, 154ff.

9. Honorius of Autun, *Imago Mundi,* I, 11 (ed. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 172).

10. Pliny, *Natural History,* VIII, 30.

11. Bartsch, ed., *Reinfrid von Braunschweig,* ll. 1837ff.; 23993–94.

12. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei,* XVI, 8.

13. Albertus Magnus, *De Animalibus,* XXI, 11–13.

14. Cf. "Problemata Theodora Gaza interprete," X, 12, in Aristotle, *Aristotelis Opera,* vol. III, 432–33.

15. Gusinde, “Kenntnisse und Urteile über Pygmäen in Antike und Mittelalter”; text by Peter of Auvergne appears at page 18ff.

16. Cf. the translation in Old German in Strasmann, ed., *Konrad Steckels deutsche Übertragung der Reise nach China des Odorico de Pordenone,* 94–95.

17. Rabanus Maurus, *De Universo,* VII, 7 (ed. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 111).

18. Cf. Lütjens, *Der Zwerg in der deutschen Heldendichtung,* 5–6; Harward, *The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition,* chapter 3: “The Court Dwarf,” 21–22.

19. Lecouteux, *Les Monstres,* vol. I, 214–15.

CHAPTER TWO.THE DWARF IN WESTERN LITERATURE

1. I did this with my book *Les Monstres,* vol. I, 57–73; vol. II, 121–40.

2. Cf. Wohlgemuth, *Riesen und Zwerge in der altfranzösischen erzählenden Dichtung.*

3. Guessard and Montaiglon, eds., *Aliscans,* ll. 6051ff.

4. Micha, ed., *Lancelot.*

5. *Erec et Enide,* trans. Staines, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes,*25. Cf. Faral, *La Légende arthurienne,* for older evidence.

6. *Erec et Enide, trans. Staines, The Complete Romances,* 46–47.

7. Lecouteux, *Mélusine et le Chevalier au Cygne,* 69–70.

8. *Roman van Lancelot,* ll. 12621ff.(ed. Jonckbloet, vol. III); cited in Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 82ff.

9. *The Knight of the Cart,* ll. 347ff., trans. Staines, *The Complete Romances,* 172. Original text in Chrétien de Troyes, *Der Karrenritter,* ed. Foerster.

10. Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes,* 135.

11. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* chap. 1, footnote 18.

12. Cross, *Motif-index of Early Irish Literature.*

13. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 6.

14. Cf. Vries, *La Religion des Celtes,* 264–65.

15. Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead,* 34, 114–15.

16. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 7.

17. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 7–8.

18. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 8.

19. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 14.

20. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 15.

21. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 13–14; cf. also Markale, *L'Épopée celtique en Bretagne,* 199–200.

22. References from Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 14.

23. Arbois de Jubainville, *Cours de Littérature celtique*, vol. III: Loth, trans., *Les Mabinogion,* 247–48; Jean Markale, *L'Épopée celtique,* 146.

24. Arbois de Jubainville, *Cours de Littérature celtique*, vol. IV, 229.

25. Jean Markale, *L'Épopée celtique,* 229–30.

26. Harward, *The Dwarfs,* 8.

27. Arbois de Jubainville, *Cours de Littérature celtique*, vol. II, 92–93.

28. *Ruodlieb*, XVIII, II. 9ff., in Langosch, ed.; *Ruodlieb, Märchenepen, Lateinische Epik des mittelalters mit deutschen versen.*

29. More details and all the references for the following can be found in my book *Les Monstres.*

30. Lecouteux, *Les Monstres,* vol. I, 57–58.

31. Lecouteux, *Les Monstres*, vol. I, 58; Lecouteux, "Des Königs Ortnit Schlaf." 4, 92.

32. *Laurin*, ll. 151–90 (ed. Holz); 197–230; Lecouteux, *Les Monstres,*vol. I, 58; *Ortnit*, str. 92, 4 (text in Jänicke, et al., eds., Deutsches Heldenbuch, vol. 3).

33. Lecouteux, *Les Monstres,* vol. II, 129–30.

34. Throughout this study I employ the word "marvelous" in accordance with the meaning I give it in my article, "Introduction au Merveilleux médiéval."

CHAPTER THREE. THE LEGEND OF AUBÉRON

1. Ruelle, ed., *Huon de Bordeaux.* I am also using François Suard's translation into modern French (1983), and Marguerite Rossi's important study, *Huon de Bordeaux et l'Évolution du genre épique au XIIIe siècle.*

2. Subrenat, ed., *Le Roman d'Auberon, Prologue de "Huon de Bordeaux."*

3. Cf. Claude Lecouteux, *Kleine Texte zur Alexandersage,* 76ff.

4. See Lecouteux, "Les Panotéens."

5. References and translation in Lecouteux, *Les Monstres,* vol. I, 99–100; vol. II, 236–39; vol. III, 11, 29.

6. Lecouteux, *Kleine Texte zur Alexandersage,* 87, §42.

7. *Vita Merlini,* in Faral, *La Légende arthurienne,* vol. III; Frappier,

ed.,*La Mort de Roi Artu.*

8. Cf. Briel, trans., *La Première continuation du "Roman de Perceval,"* 112.

9. Lecouteux, *Kleine Texte zur Alexandersage,* xiii–xiv.

10. Edited in Brewka, *Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive I., Croissant, Yde et Olive II., Huon et les Géants, sequels to Huon de Bordeaux, as contained in Turin Ms. L. II. 14.*

11. Lecouteux, "Les Pierres magiques et le Merveilleux."

12. Lecouteux, "Introduction au Merveilleux médiéval," 286–87.

13. The text appears in Meyer-Benfey, ed., *Mittelhochdeutsche Übungstexte,*180–83.

14. Cf. Jauss, "Chanson de geste et roman courtois au XIIe siècle (Analyse comparative du *Fierabras* et du *Bel Inconnu*)," 69.

15. Kapteyn, ed., *Wigalois, der Ritter mit dem Rade von Wirnt von Grafenberg.*

16. Scheludko, "Neues über Huon de Bordeaux."

17. Scheludko, "Neues über Huon de Bordeaux," 380.

18. An exhaustive bibliography and discussion of how this legend spread can be found in Meves, *Studien zu König Rother, Herzog Ernst und Grauer Rock (Orendel),* 227–47.

19. Cf. Tonnelat, "Le Roi Orendel et la Tunique sans couture du Christ."

20. Wierschin, ed., *Eckenlied, Fassung L,* str. 79–80.

21. Walz, ed., *Garel von dem blühenden Tal.*

22. Str. 21–50, in Panzer, ed., *Merlin und Seifrid de Ardemont von Albrecht von Scharfenberg.*

23. *Walberan,* ll. 773 ff., in Jänicke, et al., eds., *Deutsches Heldenbuch,* vol. 1.

24. Cf. Ruelle, ed., *Huon de Bourdeaux,* Introduction.

25. Cf. Dumézil, *Mythe et Épopée,* vol. I, 464, 473.

26. Marx, ed., *La Littérature arthurienne et le Graal,* 64–65, 117, 135ff.

27. Subrenat, ed., *Le Roman d'Auberon,* 64–65, 117, 135ff.

28. Subrenat, ed., *Le Roman d'Auberon,* xlii.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE LEGENDS OF ALBERÎCH

1. French readers should refer to the excellent French translation by Colleville and Tonnelat,*La Chanson des Nibelungen.* [For English

readers, a reliable prose translation is that of A. T. Hatto,*The Nibelungenlied,* in the Penguin Classics series. —*Ed*.]

2. Cf. Lütjens, *Der Zwerg,* §137.

3. Hatto, trans., *Nibelungenlied,* str. 493.

4. Hatto, trans., *Nibelungenlied,* str. 497.

5. *Biterolf und Dietleib,* ll. 7839 ff.; text in Jänicke, et al., eds., *Deutsches Heldenbuch,* vol. 1.

6. This and other *Poetic Edda* texts appear in Neckel, ed., *Edda,* vol. I. English version from Larrington, trans., *The Poetic Edda,* 152. The most important texts of the legend of Siegfried were translated into French by Boyer and Lot-Falck in *Les Religions de l'Europe du Nord;* cf. esp. 214ff. and 273ff.

7. Text in Jänicke, et al., eds., *Deutsches Heldenbuch,* vol. 3.

8. Cf. Lecouteux, "Zwerge und Verwandte."

9. *Wolfdietrich, str. 556* (text in Jänicke, et al., eds., Deutsches Heldenbuch, vol. 3). note 7. Cf. Lecouteux, "Des Königs Ortnit Schlaf."

10. Lecouteux, "Des Königs Ortnit Schlaf," 354–55.

11. Unger, ed., *Saga Điðriks konungs af Bern.* Cf. also Lütjens, *Der Zwerg,* §60.

12. Wierschin, ed., *Eckenlied,* str. 79.

13. See the chapter "Alberich der Meroving" in Voretzsch, *Die Composition des Huon von Bordeaux nebst kritischen Bemerkungen über Begriff und Bedeutung der Sage.*

14. Voretzsch reproduces the text of Jacques de Gyse in *Die Composition,* 407–8.

15. Cf. the description of the facts in Krappe, "Über die Quellen des Huon de Bordeaux."

CHAPTER FIVE. THE RELATIVES OF AUBÉRON

1. Original text edited by Runeberg in Graindor de Brie, *La Bataille Loquifer*. I am also using the study by Rossi, "Sur Picolet et Aubéron dans la *Bataille Loquifer*."

2. For more on the way Gandor "manufactured" his figures of fantasy, see Lecouteux, "Notes sur Isabras."

3. On this episode, see Freymond, "Artus' Kampf mit dem Katzenungetüm."

4. Arthur and Chapalu can be seen on a mosaic of Otranto Cathedral; a reproduction and study appear in Haug *Das Mosaik von Otranto,* 34–

35.

5. Guessard and Chabaille, eds., *Gaufrey chanson de geste.*

6. I am using the literary analysis of Jeanne Lods, *Le Roman de Perceforest,*103–107, as well as the texts she cites.

7. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* III, 61 (trans. Banks and Binns); Liebrecht, ed., *Des Gervasius von Tilbury Otia imperialia,* 6–8.

A PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION

1. Ruelle, ed., *Huon de Bordeaux,* 68.

CHAPTER SIX. THE DWARFS

1. See, for example, Schuermans, “Neptune et Nutons,” and Legros, “A propos des lutins et des fées.”

2. Text from Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie,* vol. III, 402. See also what Martin, the sixth-century bishop of Braga, says in Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Âge,* 20–21.

3. Here I am broadly reemploying material that I presented in greater detail in my article “Zwerge und Verwandte,” which in no way contradicts these remarks.

4. There is a complete list of the terms that apply to German dwarfs from 1150 to 1350 in my book *Les Monstres,* vol. II, 121–40.

5. The bibliographical references are provided in my article “Zwerge und Verwandte.”

6. Tonnelat, “Le Roi Orendel et la Tunique sans couture du Christ,” ll, 2413ff (ed. Berger).

7. Holz, *Laurin,* ll. 875–76; 942ff et passion.

8. *Wolfdietrich B, str. 80ff.*

9. For this treatise, *Skáldskaparmál,* I am following the edition of the *Trektarbók:* Árni Björnsson, ed., *Edda Snorra,* and Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Edda Snorra.*

10. Régis Boyer has translated the most important passages of this saga in*Les Religions,* 526ff.

11. All of this has come down to us from the *Thidrek’s saga* (see Unger, ed., *Saga Điðriks konungs af Bern).*

12. Cf. Wohlgemuth, *Riesen und Zwerge,* 97ff.

13. Cf. Renaud, “Le Peuple surnaturel des Shetland,” in which we can

see this transition of*troll* into *trow* (dwarf).

14. Cf. Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch,* s. v. *iötunn, risi.* There is also *flagð,* “giantess, witch, revenant, nightmare,” which has been verified on a runic inscription from Vetteland (fourth century); *gýgr,* “giantess”; *fleggr,* “giant”; as well as *skass/skersa/skessa,* which rather designates a demon.

15. In Graindor de Brie’s *Bataille Loquifer,* I, the giant Isabras is nicknamed the *luiton, “sprite” (ll. 183, 404, 563).*

16. Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum,* I, vi, 3, cited by Dumézil in *Du Mythe au roman,* 66 and 198.

17. English translations by Peter Fisher from Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes,* 22–23.

18. Harward, *The Dwarf,* 82.

19. Robert de Boron, *Merlin* (ed. Micha), chap. 65.

20. Cf. Boyer and Lot-Falck, *Les Religions,* for a reconstruction of the legend from the primary sources, and on the awakening of the valkyrie, see p. 287 in that work.

21. For the “Gylfaginning,” I have used the Lorenz edition, which is accompanied by a very substantial commentary. For the “Skáldskaparmál,” I have used Árni Björnsson, ed.,*Snorra Edda.* Unless otherwise noted, all *Poetic Edda* translations are from Larrington and*Prose Edda* translations from Byock.

22. *Poetic Edda,* “Vafþrúðnismál,” str. 21 (trans. Larrington; Old Norse versions of names added) 23. *Poetic Edda,* “Völuspá,” str. 9 (trans. Larrington; Old Norse versions of names added) 24. Lorenz, *Gylfaginning,* chap. 14.

25. Cf. *Physica,* introduction to the Eighth book (ed. Migne, *Patrologia Latina,* 197).

26. Keller, ed., *Das deutsche Heldenbuch nach dem muthmasslich ältesten Drucke,* 1–2.

27. Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum,* I, v, 5.

28. *Magnificat,* ll. 77ff; original text in Bartsch, ed., “Mitteldeutsches Magnificat.”

29. For more on these creatures, see Lecouteux, “Nicchus-Nix.”

30. Cf. Lorenz, ed., *Gylfaginning,* 211ff.

31. Gandálfr, Vindálfr, Vitr, Fjölsvitr, Raðspakr, Ráðviðr.

32. Such as Nóri, Dúfr, Hárr, Jari, Litr. For more on all the names

cited here and in the following notes, see Gould, “Dwarf-Names: A Study in Old Icelandic Religion,” which can be corrected with the help of Lorenz, ed., *Gylfaginning.*

33. Hanarr, Skirvir/Skáviðr, Náli, Fili.

34. Sindri, Úri, Síarr.

35. Ginnarr, Dólgr, Miöðvitnir.

36. Galarr, Finnr/Fiðr, Dagfinnr, Óri. On the Sámi and their magic, see Boyer, *Le Monde du double,* 58ff.

37. Bláinn, Bruni (which can be compared with the English “brownie,” a name for some dwarfs), Dáinn, Dvalinn, Dáni, Nár, Haugspori, Búinn, Frosti. I should add “Pierced by a horn,” Hornbori.

38. Niði, Nyi.

39. Ái. Cf. Boyer, *La Religion,* 54ff.

40. Boyer, *La Religion,* 55; De Boor, “Der Zwerg in Skandinavien.”

41. Cf. Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead,* 149–51.

42. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, “Ynglinga saga,” chap. 12 (trans. Finlay and Faulkes). Original text in Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ed.*Heimskringla,* vol. I, 27–28. Cf. Dumézil, *Du mythe au roman,* 133–34; Boyer, *La Religion,* 55.

43. Zink, *Le Wunderer,* 81.

44. Cf. Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead,* 94–94; Schmitt, “Temps, Folklore et Politique au XIIe siècle.”

45. Cf. Chudacet, *Les Nains et les Morts dans la religion germano-scandinave.*

46. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda,* “Gylfaginning,” chap. 14 (trans. Byock).

47. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda,* “Skáldskaparmál,” chap. 61.

48. Larrington, trans., *Poetic Edda,* “Alvissmál,” str. 2 (trans. Larrington); Boyer and Lot-Falck, *Les Religions,* 70ff.

49. “Alvissmál,” str. 35 (trans. Larrington).

50. Mircea Eliade, *Forgerons et Alchimistes.*

51. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda,* chap. 34 (trans. Byock).

52. For more on Kvasir: Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, “Skáldskaparmál,” chap. 61; the*kenningar* (kennings; i.e., extended metaphors) I quoted can be found there.

53. See *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konunga,* ed. Guðni Jónsson, in *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, vol. III; cf. also Lecouteux, *The Return of*

the Dead, 70–72.

54. *Poetic Edda*, "Reginsmál," introduction in prose (trans. Larrington).

55. Boyer, *La Religion*, 96.

56. Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Germains*, 9; and also Boyer, *La Religion*, 198–99.

57. Larrington, trans., *Poetic Edda*, "Völuspá," str. 51; Boyer and Lot-Falck, *Les Religions*, 486, n. 828.

58. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, "Skáldskaparmál," chap. 23 (trans. Russell Poole, in the Byock edition); Dumézil,*Loki*, 53.

59. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, "Gylfaginning," chap. 33–34 (trans. Byock).

60. Dumézil, *Loki*, 35.

61. Dumézil, *Du Mythe au roman*, 88–89.

62. *Fjölvinnsmál*, Str. 34 in *Poetic Edda.*

63. Dumézil, *Loki*, 52.

64. "*Her com in gangan in spiderwiht.*" Van Kirk Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, "3. Against a Dwarf," 121.

65. Olrik, "Myterne om Loke"; Vries, *The Problem of Loki*, 233ff.; Dumézil, *Loki, 101, n. 2.*

CHAPTER SEVEN. THE ELVES

1. Tacitus, *Germania*, chap. 7.

2. Cf. Boyer, *Le Monde du double*, 117ff.

3. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, vol. I, 367.

4. Mastrelli, "Un'etimologia inedita di F. de Saussure."

5. Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 5–6; Kuhn, "Sprachvergleichung und Urgeschichte der indogermanischen Völker," 110.

6. Jente, "Die mythologischen Ausdrücke im altenglischen Wortschatz," 170–73.

7. Förstemann, *Altdeutsches Namenbuch*, vol. I, col. 64ff.

8. Thun, "The Malignant Elves," 392.

9. Stuart, "The Anglo-Saxon Elf," 316.

10. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, "Gylfaginning," chap. 17. Discussion in Lorenz, ed., *Gylfaginning*, 271–72.

11. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, "Gylfaginning," chap. 24 (trans. Byock). Bibliography in Lorenz, ed., *Gylfaginning*, 341ff.

12. Larrington, trans., *Poetic Edda,* “För Skirnis,” str. 18. Another example appears in “Odin’s Ravens’ Song” (Hrafnagaldur Óðins), a post-medieval (seventeenth-century?) Eddic-style poem that nevertheless contains older material, which begins: “Odin has the power; elves, understanding; and the Vanir, knowledge”; cf. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie,* vol. I, 366.

13. Cited in Boyer, *Le Monde,* 113–14.

14. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla,* “Ynglingasaga,” chap. 21: *“Yngvi ok Álfr váru synir Alreks. . . .”*

15. Boyer, *La religion,* 170.

16. Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning,* vol. I, 221, str. 3–8. Used again by Snorri Sturluson in the *Heimskringla* and translated by Boyer in *La Saga de Saint Olaf,* 102–3.

17. *Kormáks saga,* chap. 22, in Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, ed., *Vatnsdœla saga.*

18. Jeay, ed., *Les Évangiles des quenouilles.* On the belief of the protective virtues of urine, see the article by Smith, “An Historical Study of the Werwolf in Literature,” 8, note 2 (with bibliography).

19. I have also discussed this point in my book *The Return of the Dead,* 181–91.

20. On another aspect of these “canonizations,” see Schmitt, “La Fabrique des Saints,” with an important bibliography.

21. Cf. Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead,* 20–30.

22. Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte,* vol. I, 258–59.

23. Cf. Le Goff, *La Naissance du Purgatoire.*

24. For more on this legend, see Ker, “The Craven Angels”; Keightley, *Fairy Mythology;* for Iceland, see Meyer, *Mythologie der Germanen,* 154.

25. *Poetic Edda,* “Völundarkviða”; French translation in Boyer and Lot-Falck,*Les Religions,* 506–16.

26. See *Rabenschlacht,* str. 964, in Martin, ed., *Deutsches Heldenbuch,* vol. II.

27. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda,* “Gylfaginning,” chap. 14 (trans. Byock).

28. See Schröder, “Die Wielandsage.”

29. Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Germains,* 28.

30. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie,* vol. I, 149, et passim.

31. *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* IV, 26–27, in Trillmich, ed., *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches,* here at 470.

32. Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Germains,* 116.

33. Larrington, trans., *Poetic Edda,* "Hárbarzlióð," str. 24; Vries, "Über das Wort*Jarl* und seine Verwandten," 468. These lines were written when Boyer published his splendid study, "Fjörgyn," which supplies proof of Thor's collusion with the dead and their obvious connections with the Third Function.

34. Cf. Lecouteux, *Melusine et le Chevalier au Cygne,* introduction and chap. 7.

35. Cf. the observations made by Perridon in the review of the Festschrift *Florilegium Nordicum* in the *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* (1985).

36. The important review of this question by Boyer, "Les Valkyries et leurs Noms," should be cited*in extenso.*

37. Boyer, "Les Valkyries et leurs Noms," 54.

38. Cf. "Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris et de caeteris spiritibus," in Paracelsus, *Werke,* vol. III, 462–98, here at 481.

39. Dumézil, *Mythe et Épopée,* vol. I, 630–31.

40. Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Kambriæ,* I, 8 (in Dimrock, ed., *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*), here at 75ff.

41. Original Latin text in Hamilton, ed., *Historia rerum Anglicarum Willelmi Parvi,* 73–75.

42. Pons, ed., *Sire Gauvain et le Chevalier Vert.* For more on its Celtic connections, see Marx, *La Littérature arthurienne,* 76–77 and 289–91.

43. I do not concur with what B. F. Beardsmore says in "L'Origine des nains Galopin et Aubéron." Galopin, a dwarf valet who plays a certain role in*Élie de Saint-Gilles,* a chanson de geste from the second half of the twelfth century, has only a remote connection with Aubéron. The only theme that the author of*Huon de Bordeaux* seems to have borrowed is the curse of the fairies that caused his dwarfism.

44. Cf. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum,* II, 30.

45. Cited in Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie,* vol. III, 421.

46. Cf. Sébillot, *Le Folklore de France,* vol. IV, s.v. *lutin* and *nain.*

1. Cited in Boyer and Lot-Falck, *Les Religions*, 519–20 (= *Buslubœn*, str. 8).

2. Jente, “Die mythologischen Ausdrücke,” 168–73.

3. Lecouteux, “Nicchus-Nix.”

4. *Beowulf*, ll. 110ff. (ed. Nickel, vol. I). On Grendel, cf. Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead*, 194–201.

5. See Lecouteux, “Zwerge und Verwandte.”

6. Cf. Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England*, vol. I, 364.

7. Edited in Cockayne, *Leechdoms.*

8. Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, vol. II, 344.

9. Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, vol. II, 345, 347.

10. Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, vol. III, 118.

11. Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, vol. II, 157.

12. Van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, 4. “For a Sudden Stitch,” 122–23. I have marked the line where the original text is unclear with [?]. English translation from Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context*, 139.

13. Ll. 33–37; text edited in Grienberger, “Der Münchener Nachtsegen,” 337–38.

14. Wilson, ed., *Samsons saga fagra*, chap. 18.

15. Cf. Cederschiöld and Wulff, *Versions nordiques du fabliau français;* French text edited by Wolf in *Über die Lais, Sequenzen und Leiche*, 342–47.

16. Original Latin text in Mabillon, *Vetera analecta*, 326; text and commentary in Lecouteux, “Vom Schrat zum Schrättel,” 105–8.

17. Dumézil, *Loki*, 57.

18. William of Auvergne, *De Universo*, II, 3, 24; cited in Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Âge*, 55.

19. See Schmitt, “Les Traditions folkloriques dans la culture médiévale.”

20. Konrad von Würzburg, *Partenopier und Meliur*, ll. 805ff; cf. also Lecouteux *Mélusine, 79ff.*

21. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, vol. III, 502.

22. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, vol. III, 504.

23. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, vol. III, 502.

24. Grienberger, ed., “Der Münchener Nachtsegen,” 336–37.

25. Lecouteux, “Vom Schrat zum Schrättel,” 104–5.

26. Lecouteux, “Hagazussa-Striga-Hexe.”

27. Cf. Lecouteux, “Mara-Ephialtes-Incubus.”

28. Etymon or root word. On this general topic, it is well worth reading Pierre Guirad’s little book, *L’Étymologie.*

29. Cf. Riegler, “Romanische Namen des Alpdrucks (Incubus).” Riegler does not mention the*appesart.* Claude Thomasset (Sorbonne) informs me that the latter term has been attested since the thirteenth century.

30. Cockayne, *Leechdoms,* vol. II, *Læce Boc* I, title to §lxiv (pp. 14, 15).

31. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, “Ynglingasaga,” chap. 13; translation based on that of Finlay and Faulkes. See also Boyer’s analysis in*Le Monde*, 104.

32. Cf. Lecouteux, “Mara-Ephialtes-Incubus.”

33. *Irregang und Girregar* is edited in Von der Hagen, *Gesammtabenteuer, vol. III, 43–82.*

34. Riegler, “Romanische Namen,” 60.

35. William of Newbury, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, V, 22 (Hamilton, ed., *Historia rerum Anglicarum Willelmi Parvi).* Cf. Rohde, *Psyché: Le culte de l’ âme chez les Grecs et leur croyance à l’ immortalité,*561, note 3 in reference to the dead tormenting the foe in the form of nightmares,*ephialtes,* and incubi.

36. Abry and Charles Joisten, “De lutins en cauchemars.” I would like to thank Charles Abry for sending me this fine article.

37. Abry and Charles Joisten, “De lutins en cauchemars,” 128.

CHAPTER NINE. THE SURVIVORS OF PAGAN LEGENDS

1. Sébillot, *Le Folklore*, vol. I, 456ff.

2. Haust, “Les Gnomes,” 141–42.

3. Förstemann, *Altdeutsches Namenbuch,* vol. I, col. 436.

4. Augustine, *The City of God,* trans. Dods, vol. II, 92–93. On the *dusius,* see Wartburg, *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch,* vol. III, 195.

5. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, VIII, 11, 97.

6. For this entire development, see Lecouteux, “Hagazussa-Striga-Hexe.”

7. Lecouteux, “Hagazussa-Striga-Hexe,” 57–58; Jente, “Die mythologischen Ausdücke,” 295–98.

8. Thomas of Cantimpré, *Bonum universal de apibus*, 548–49.

9. Cf. Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead*, 212–17.

10. Cf. *L’Année épigraphique 1976*, no. 335.

11. Cf. *L’Année épigraphique 1977*, no. 146 (*Sylvanus sanctus*); no. 626 (*Sylvanus viator*, *silvester*).

12. Feilberg, “Der Kobold in nordischer Überlieferung,” 139.

13. Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Âge*, 228.

14. Cf. Liebrecht, ed., *Des Gervasius von Tilbury Otia imperialia*, 29–30; on the sprites regarded as fauns and satyrs, cf. 6–8.

15. “Der schretel und der wazzerbär,” in Von der Hagen, *Gesammtabenteuer*, vol. III, 257ff.

16. Vries, *La Religion des Celtes*, 179.

17. Lecoy de la Marche, ed., *Anecdotes historiques, légendes et apologues tirés du Recueil inédit d’Étienne de Bourbon, dominicain du XIIIe siècle*, 322.

18. Ménard, “Une Parole rituelle dans la chevauchée fantastique de la Mesnie Hellequin.”

19. Markale, *L’Épopée celtique en Bretagne*, 180, note 2.

20. Vries, *La religion des Celtes*, 108ff. We can also envision the reunion of similar beliefs born from a common Indo-European basis, with linguistic evolution having led to *Neutto(n)* in one culture and *Neptunus* in another. For more on the Neptunian issues, see Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et Épopée*, vol. III, 34–35.

21. Schuermans, “Neptune et Nutons.”

22. Legros, “À propos des lutins et des fees.” See also Haust, “Les Gnomes dans les parlers de la Wallonie.”

23. Cf. *Corpus inscriptionum latinorum*, vol. II, 365 (Conimbriga); 3386; 5278 (Turgalium) http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/drupal/?q=en/node/291 (Accessed April 11, 2018).

24. Cf. the entry for “Kobold” in Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*.

25. Sébillot, *Le Folklore de France*, vol. III, 113.

26. *L’Année épigraphique 1976*, no. 502–3.

27. Map, *De nugis curialium*, I, 11; Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead*.

28. Feilberg, “Der Kolbold,” 5 and 276–77. “Spirit” is the word I am using for*attrgangaren, which designates a revenant.*

29. For a detailed study of all the developments touched upon here, see Lecouteux, “Vom Schrat zum Schrättel,” where the relevant references can also be found.

30. Hincmar de Reims, *Capitula presbyteris data,* chap. 14, edited in Migne,*Patrologia Latina,* 125, col. 776–77.

31. Cf. the entry for “Schrat” by Ranke in Bächtold-Stäubli, *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens,* vol. VII, col. 1289.

32. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie,* vol. III, 422.

33. Lexer, *Kärntisches Wörterbuch,* 225.

34. Cf. Lecouteux, “Zwerge und Verwandte,” 374.

35. Cf. Durand, *Rationale divinorum officiorum,* VII, 8.

36. Burchard von Worms, *Decretum,* XIX, 5, 103; text edited in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 140, col. 1066.

37. Text edited in Mabillon, *Vetera analecta,* 326–27.

38. *Liber Monstrorum,* chap. 6; text edited by Reinhold Merkelbach in Pfister, *Kleine Schriften zum Alexanderroman,* 380–93, here at 382.

39. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* I, 18.

40. Feilberg, “Der Kobold,” 276.

41. Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft,* Letter V.

42. Feilberg, “Der Kobold,” 276.

43. Map, *De nugis curialium,* IV, 8; cf. Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Âge,*138-39

AFTERWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

1. Lindig, *Hausgeister.* See also her entry “Hausgeister,” in Ranke, ed., *Enzyklopädie des Märchens,* vol. VI, col. 610–17.

2. Linhart, *Hausgeister in Franken.*

3. Lecouteux, *Demons and Spirits of the Land.*

4. Lecouteux and Marcq, *Les Esprits et les Morts,* 41 (dwarf smith); 43–50 (household spirit); 61 (the green children); 67 (the kingdom of the dwarfs); 77 (the dwarf’s hand).

5. Amilien, *Les Créatures surnaturelles dans les contes norvégiens.*

6. Joisten, *Etres fantastiques des Alpes.*

7. Marliave, *Petit Dictionnaire de mythologies basque et pyrénéenne.*

8. Enderle, Meyerhöfer, and Unverfehrt, eds., *La gente diminuta en el gran arte.*

9. Izzi, *Il dizionario illustrato dei mostri,* s. v. *nani*, 254, and 429 (bibliography).

10. Wildhaber, *Der Altersvers des Wechselbalges und die übrigen Altersverse.*

11. Blehr, *Folketro og sagnforskning.*

12. Huygen and Poortvliet, *Das große Buch der Heinzelmännchen.*

13. Grambo, "Balladen om Hakje og bergemannen."

14. Christiansen, "The Sisters and the Troll"; this article had escaped my attention—it deals with the countertype AT 311.

15. Eckard, "Le Graal discriminant, le Cor et le Révélateur des Nartes."

16. Mdluli, *Recherche d'une structuration de l'espace romanesque,* 330–34. I would like to thank Philippe Walter (Grenoble) who alerted me to the existence of this work.

17. Cf. Abry and Alice Joisten, "Etres fantastiques conducteurs de coulees dans les Alpes," "Le pain, le fromage et le vin des aumônes," and "Emergences de l'eau à travers quelques récits de croyances aux êtres fantastiques en Savoie, Dauphiné et Piémont"; also Abry, "Des vaches, véhicules de la vigne et du grain," and "Les récits d'origine et l'homme sauvage."

18. Cf. Arend Quak's review of the original French edition in *Mediaevistik* 2 (1989): 293–95.

19. Cf. Lecouteux, "Zwerge und Verwandte."

20. Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache,* 2nd ed., 663.

21. *Nord Nytt* 43 (1991). See the other etymologies suggested in Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch,* 9–10: "fear, attention, caution, protector of life." He suggests a connection between *and* and *animus.*

22. Lecouteux, "Un singulière conception de l'âme."

23. The kingdom's prosperity depends on tutelary and place-spirits; cf. Lecouteux,*Demons and Spirits of the Land.*

24. Schneider, ed., *Iohannis abbatis Victoriensis Liber certarum historiarum,*VI, 1. This testimony can be compared to that of Henry of Hereford; cf. Lecouteux and Marcq,*Les Esprits,* 77–80.

25. Lecouteux, "Le trésor des Nibelungen"; by the same author, *La Légende de Siegfried d'après la Chanson de Seyfried à la Peau-de-Corne et la Saga de Thidrek de Vérone,*30–50, *and cf. also* 21–24.

26. Motz, *The Wise One of the Mountain.*

27. Ruhe, *Gelehrtes Wissen, "Aberglaube" und pastorale Praxis im französischen Spätmittelalter,* 295.

28. Cf. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic,* 269, 282, 305, from which I have taken the examples cited.

29. Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, trans. Banks and Binns, bk. III, sec. 61 (pp. 65–67). I have included some phrases from the original text when they are interesting.

30. Sterckx, "Nûtons, Lûtons et dieux celtes."

31. Pinon, "D'un dieu gaulois à un nain malmédien." We should note that the *dusius* is also mentioned in *Malleus Maleficarum* by the inquisitors Jacob Sprenger and Heinrich Kramer. Sterckx, "Nûtons" (49, fn. 70), contests the comparison of*dusius* with the Breton *Deuz,* "ghost, specter, sprite, demon," but he approaches the problem the wrong way: I am only talking about the singular *teuz* (See here), and not the form *an Deuzed* in which the *d* is due to the lenition of the initial of masculine personal names in the plural. He points out the existence of the Cornwall *diz,* "which seem to be the heirs of the Gallic *Dusii.*" It will be noted that researchers hold on to Saint Augustine's assertion (*De civitate Dei,* XV, 23) that the Duse is from Gaul, while nothing could be less certain, so there is no good reason to confine our etymological investigations to the Celtic domain.

32. Kramer and Sprenger, *Le Marteau des sorcières,* trans. *Danet,* 166–67 (*Malleus maleficarum,* I, 3).

33. Published in Spire by Peter Drach in 1487; folio 12r°b.

34. Barack, *Die Zimmersche Chronik,* vol. IV, 227ff. I owe my knowledge of this text to Karl Schwarzfischer.

35. Cf. Schwarzfischer, *Zur Frage der Schrazellöcher oder Erdställe,* 41–49, for the attribution to fairies and dwarfs.

36. Address: Schorndorfer Straße 31, 8495 Roding, Germany.

37. Published by Dr. Max Poitel, Centre Culturel, Marie d'Arteny

(Loiret), F-45410, France.

38. Klein et al., eds., *Die Vokabulare von Fritsche Closener und Jacob Twinger von Königshofen*, vol. I, 487; vol. II, 720. The term used to translate *ephialtes* is *scröczlin*, variants of which are: *schretelin, scharczlein, schrätlin.*

AFTERWORD TO THE FOURTH EDITION

1. Beardsmore, “Les enfances Aubéron dans *Ysaïe le Triste* et leur importance dans la structure du roman.”

2. Ferlampin-Acher, “*Larron* contre *luiton.*”

3. Szkilnik, “Deux héritiers de Merlin au XIVe siècle”; Victorin, “Un nain et un papegau.”

4. Ferlampin-Acher, “Incorporer les esprits.”

5. Ferlampin-Acher, “Le luiton: du transgénique au transgénérique, un motif à la peau dure,” to appear in the papers of the symposium *Motifs merveilleux et poétique des genres au Moyen Âge*, under the direction of F. Dubost, F. Gingras, A. Strubel, and J.-R. Valette, Montreal, May 31–June 2, 2007. I would like to thank the author for sending me this text.

6. Martineau, *Les Nains dans la littérature arthurienne française du Moyen Âge.*

7. Martineau, *Le Nain et le Chevalier.*

8. Jean-Michel Doulet, *Quand les démons enlevaient les enfants.*

9. Lecouteux, *Nos Bons Voisins.*

10. Lecouteux, *Encyclopedia of Norse and Germanic Folklore, Mythology, and Magic*.

11. Habicht, *Der Zwerg als Träger matafiktionaler Diskurse in deutschen und französischen Texten des Mittelalters.* (Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 38).

12. Tarentul, *Elfen, Zwerge und Riesen.*

13. *Du nain au nain de jardin*, Brussels, 2000.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Icelandic names are alphabetized according to first name rather than surname.

Abry, Christian. “Des vaches, véhicules de la vigne et du grain.” In *L’Homme et les Alpes.* Edited by Christine Détraz, *et al.* Grenoble: Glénat, 1992, 237–41.

———. “Les récits d’origine et l’homme sauvage.” In *L’Homme et les Alpes.* Edited by Christine Détraz, *et al.* Grenoble: Glénat, 1992, 381–84.

Abry, Christian, and Alice Joisten. “Emergences de l’eau à travers quelques récits de croyances aux êtres fantastiques en Savoie, Dauphiné et Piémont.” In *Studium et museum: Mélanges Edouard Remouchamps*. 2 vols. Liège, Belgium: Musée de la Vie Wallonne, 1996, 156–58.

———. “Etres fantastiques conducteurs de coulees dans les Alpes: Du hasard et de la nécessité des spéculations dans la narration.” *Le Monde Alpin et Rhodanien* (1995): 39–66.

———. “Le pain, le fromage et le vin des aumônes: une étiologie au-dessus de tout soupçon.” *Le Monde Alpin et Rhodanien* (1995): 89–96.

Abry, Christian, and Charles Joisten. “Des lutins en cauchemars … À proposd’un nom chablaisien du Luton domestique: le ‘Chaufaton.’” *Le Monde alpin et rhodanien: Revue régionale d’ethnologie,* no. 1–2 (1976): 125–32.

Albertus Magnus. *De Animalibus libri XXVI, nach der Cölner Urschrift.* Edited by Hermann Stadler. 2 vols. Munster, Germany: Aschendorff, 1916–1920.

Amilien, Virginie. *Les Créatures surnaturelles dans les contes norvégiens*. 2 vols. Thesis, University of Paris-Sorbonne, 1994.

Arbois de Jubainville, Henri d’. *Cours de Littérature celtique.* 12 vols. Paris: Thorin, 1883–1902.

Aristotle. *Aristotelis Opera,* vol. III. Berlin: Reimer, 1831.

Árni Björnsson, ed. *Edda Snorra.* Reykjavik: Iðunn, 1975.

Augustine. *De Civitate Dei.* English edition: *The City of God.* Translated by Marcus Dods. 2 vols. New York: Hafner, 1948.

Bächtold-Stäubli, H. *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens.* 10 vols. Berlin: Gruyter, 1927–1942.

Barack, Karl August. *Die Zimmersche Chronik.* 4 vols. Tübingen,

Germany: Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 1869.

Bartsch, Karl, ed. “Mitteldeutsches Magnificat.” *Germania* 20 (1875): 3–7.

———, ed. *Reinfrid von Braunschweig.* Tübingen, Germany: Litterarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1871.

Beardsmore, Barry F. “Les enfances Aubéron dans *Ysaïe le Triste* et leur importance dans la structure du roman.” *Sénéfiance* 7 (1979): 104–13.

———. “L’Origine des nains Galopin et Aubéron.” *Studia Neophilologica* 52 (1982): 153–59.

Berger, Arnold Erich, ed. Orendel: Ein deutsches Spielmannsgedicht. Bonne: Weber, 1888.

Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ed. *Heimskringla 1.* Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1941.

Blehr, Otto. *Folketroog sagnforskning.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974.

Boyer, Régis. “Fjörgyn.” In *Mort et fécondité dans les mythologies.* Edited by François Jouan. Paris: Belles Lettres, 1986, 139–50.

———. *La Religion des anciens Scandinaves.* Paris: Payot, 1981.

———, *trans.* La Saga de Saint Olaf. Paris: Payot, 1983.

———. *Le Monde du double: La magie chez les anciens Scandinaves.* Paris: Berg, 1986.

———. “Les Valkyries et leurs Noms.” In *Mythe et Personnification.* Edited by Jacqueline Duchemin. Paris: Belles Lettres, 1980, 39–54.

Boyer, Régis, and Éveline Lot-Falck. *Les Religions de l’Europe du Nord.* Paris: Fayard, 1974.

Brewka, Barbara Anne. *Esclarmonde, Clarisse et Florent, Yde et Olive I., Croissant, Yde et Olive II., Huon et les Géants, sequels to Huon de Bordeaux, as contained in Turin Ms. L. II. 14.* Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1977.

Briel, Henri de. *La Première continuation du “Roman de Perceval.”* Paris: Klincksieck, 1972.

Caesar, Julius. *The Gallic War.* Latin text with translation by H. J. Edwards. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1917.

Cederschiöld, Gustaf, and Fredrik Amadeus Wulff. *Versions nordiques du fabliau français: Le mantel mautaillé.* Lund: Gleerup, 1877.

Chrétien de Troyes. *Der Karrenritter (Chevalier de la Charrette).*

Edited by W. Foerster. Halle, Germany: Niemeyer, 1899.

Christiansen, Reidar Thoralf. “The Sisters and the Troll: Notes to a Folktale.” In *Studies in Folklore in Honor of Stith Thomson.* Edited by W. Edson Richmond. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957, 24–39.

Chudacet, Laurence. *Les Nains et les Morts dans la religion germano-scandinave.* Thesis, Paris-Sorbonne, 1983.

Cockayne, Thomas Oswald. *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England.* 3 vols. London: Holland, 1961 [1866].

Colleville, Maurice, and Ernest Tonnelat, trans. *La Chanson des Nibelungen.* Paris: Aubier, 1945.

Cross, Tom Peete. *Motif-index of Early Irish Literature.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1952.

De Boor, Helmut. “Der Zwerg in Skandinavien.” *Festschrift Eugen Mogk zum 70. Geburtstag 19. Juli 1924.* Halle, Germany: Niemeyer, 1924, 536–57.

Delbouille, M. “Notes de Philologie et de folklore.” *Bulletin de la Société de langue et de literature wallonnes* 68 (1947): 105–44.

Doulet, Jean-Michel. *Quand les démons enlevaient les enfants. Les changelins: étude d’une figure mythique.* Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne (Traditions & Croyances), 2003.

Dumézil, Georges. *Du Mythe au roman.* Paris: P.U.F., 1970.

———. *Les Dieux des Germains.* Paris: P.U.F., 1959.

———. *Loki.* Paris: Flammarion, 1986.

———. *Mythe et Épopée.* 3 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1968–1973.

Durand, Guillaume. *Rationale divinorum officiorum.* Paris: Vivès, 1672.

Eckard, Gilles. “Le Graal discriminant, le Cor et le Révélateur des Nartes.” In *Actes du XVIIIe Congrès International de Linguistique et de Philologie Romanes.* Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1988, 395–404.

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, ed. *Vatnsdœla saga.* Reykjavik: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1939.

Eliade, Mircea. *Forgerons et Alchimistes.* Paris: Flammarion, 1956.

Ellekilde, H. “Om Sigvat Skjalds Alfeblotstropfer og Alfhildsagnet i Hervarasaga.”*Acta Philologica Scandinavica 8 (1983): 182–92.*

Enderle, Alfred, Dietrich Meyerhöfer, and Gerd Unverfehrt. *La gente diminuta en el gran arte: hipocrecimiento desde el punto de vista artístico y médico.* Hamm: Artcolor, 1994.

Faral, Edmond. *La Légende arthurienne.* 3 vols. Paris: Champion, 1969.

Feilberg, Henning F. “Der Kobold in nordischer Überlieferung.” *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde 8 (1898): 1–20, 130–46, 264–77.*

Ferlampin-Acher, Christine. “Incorporer les esprits: le *luiton* Zéphir et *Mélusine.*” In *Doxa: Études sur la forms et la construction de la croyances.* Edited by P. Hummel. Paris: Philologicum, 2010, 101–13.

———. “*Larron* contre *luiton:* les métamorphoses de Maugis.” In *Entre épopée et legend: les Quatre fils Aymon ou Renaut de Montauban.* Edited by D. Quéniot. Langres, France: Guéniot, 2000, 101–18.

Fink, Gonthier-Luis. *Naissance et Apogée du conte merveilleux en Allemagne (1740–1800).* Paris: Belles Lettres, 1966.

Finnur, Jónsson, ed. *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*. 2 vols. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–1915.

———. *Edda Snorra.* Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1931.

Förstemann, Ernst. *Altdeutsches Namenbuch I: Personennamen.* Munich: Fink, 1967.

Frappier, Jean. *Chrétien de Troyes.* Paris: Hatier, 1968.

———, ed. *La Mort de Roi Artu.* Geneva and Paris: Droz/Minard, 1964.

Freymond, Emile. “Artus’ Kampf mit dem Katzenungetüm: Eine Episode der Vulgata des Livre d’Artus, die Sage und ihre Lokalisierung in Savoyen.” In *Beiträge zur romanischen Philologie: Festgabe für Gustav* Gröber. Halle (Saale), Germany: Niemeyer, 1899, 311–96.

Gerald of Wales. *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*. Edited by J. F. Dimrock. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868.

Gerhardt, Mia I. *Old Men of the Sea: From Neptunus to Old French “Luiton,” Ancestry and Character of a Water-Spirit.* Amsterdam: Polak & Van Gennep, 1967.

Gervase of Tilbury. *Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor.* Edited and translated by S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Goetz, Georg. *Corpus glossariorum latinorum.* 6 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1899.

Gould, Chester Nathan. “Dwarf-Names: A Study in Old Icelandic Religion.”*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 44 (1929): 939–67.*

Graindor de Brie. La Bataille Loquifer, édition critique d'après les manuscrits de l'Arsenal et de Boulogne. Edited by J. Runeberg. Helsinki: Société de Littérature finnoise, 1913.

Grambo, Ronald. "Balladen om Hakje og bergemannen." *Arv* 28 (1972): 55–81.

Gregory of Tours. *Historia Francorum.* In *Monumenta Germaniae Historica,* SRM 1.1. Online at www.dmgh.de (accessed April 10, 2018).

Grienberger, Theodor von, ed. "Der Münchener Nachtsegen." *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 41 (1897): 335–63.

Grimm, Jacob. *Deutsche Mythologie.* 3 vols. Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965.

———. *Irische Elfenmärchen.* Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962.

Guðni Jónsson, ed. *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda.* 4 vols. Reykjavik: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1959.

Guessard, François, and Pierre Chabaille, eds. *Gaufrey chanson de geste.* Paris: Franck, 1859.

Guessard, François, and Anatole de Montaiglon, eds. *Aliscans chanson de geste.* Paris: Franck, 1870.

Guirad, Pierre. *L'Étymologie.* Paris: P.U.P., 1964.

Gusinde, M. "Kenntnisse und Urteile über Pygmäen in Antike und Mittelalter."*Nova Acta Leopoldina XXV (1962): 12–26.*

Gutenbrunner, Siegfried. "Edda-Studien I: Über die Zwerge in der Völuspá Str. 9–13." *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi* 70 (1955): 61–75.

Habicht, Isabel. *Der Zwerg als Träger matafiktionaler Diskurse in deutschen und französischen textendes Mittelalters*. Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift Beiheft 38. Heidelberg: Winter, 2010.

Hamilton, Hans Claude, ed. *Historia rerum Anglicarum Willelmi Parvi,* vol. I. London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1856.

Harf-Lancner, Laurence. *Les Fées au Moyen Âge.* Paris: Slatkine, 1984.

Hartlaub, Gustav Friedrich. *Der Gartenzwerg und seine Ahnen.* Heidelberg: Moos, 1962.

———. *Zwerge, Hofzwerge, Gartenzwerge: Eine Genealogie des Gartenzwerges.* Gefrath-Dorenberg: Niederrheinischen Freilichtmuseum, 1973.

Harward, Vernon J. *The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition.* Leiden, Germany: Brill, 1958.

Hatto, A. T., trans. *The Nibelungenlied.* London: Penguin, 1969.

Haug, Walter. *Das Mosaik von Otranto: Darstellung, Deutung und Bilddokumentation.* Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1977.

Haust, J. "Les Gnomes dans les parlers de la Wallonie." *Bulletin des Enquêtes de la Vie wallone* IV (1946): 141–46.

Holz, George, ed. *Laurin und der Kleine Rosengarten.* Halle (Saale): Niemeyer, 1897.

Huygen, Wil, and Rien Poorvliet. *Das große Buch der Heinzelmännchen: Die ganze Wahrheit über Herkunft, Leben und Wirken des Zwergenvolkes.* Translated by A. Lüders-Knegtmans. Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1983.

Isidore of Seville. *Etymologiae.* English translation: *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville.* Translated by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Izzi, Massimo. *Il dizionario illustrato dei monstri, angeli, diavoli, orchi, draghi, sirene e alter creature dell' immaginario.* Rome: Gremese, 1989.

Jänicke, Oskar, et al., eds. *Deutsches Heldenbuch.* 2nd edition. 5 vols. Berlin and Zurich: Weidmann, 1963 [1866–1873].

Jauss, H. R. "Chanson de geste et roman courtois au XIIe siècle (Analyse comparative du *Fierabras* et du *Bel Inconnu*)." In *Chanson de geste und höfischer Roman—Heidelberger Kolloquium, 30. Januar 1961*. Edited by Pierre Le Gentil. Heidelberg: Winter, 1963, 61–77.

Jeay, Madeleine, ed. *Les Évangiles des quenouilles.* Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1985.

Jente, Richard. "Die mythologischen Ausdrücke im altenglischen Wortschatz."*Anglistische Forschungen* 56 (1921): 1–334.

Joisten, Alice. *Ëtres fantastiques des Alpes: Extraits de la collecte Charles Joisten, 1936–1981.* Paris: Entente, 1995.

Jolly, Karen Louise. *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Kapteyn, J. M. N., ed. *Wigalois, der Ritter mit dem Rade von Wirnt von Grafenberg.* Bonn: Klopp, 1926.

Keightley, Thomas. *Fairy Mythology.* London: Bohn, 1850.

Keller, Adelbert von, ed. *Das deutsche Heldenbuch nach dem muthmasslich ältesten Drucke.* Stuttgart: Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 1867.

Ker, W. P. "The Craven Angels." *Modern Language Review* 6 (1911): 85–87.

Klein, Dorothea, et al., eds. *Die Vokabulare von Fritsche Closener und Jacob Twinger von Königshofen.* 3 vols. Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1995.

Kluge, Friedrich. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache.* 2nd edition. Revised by Elmar Seebold. Berlin and New York: Gruyter, 1989.

Konrad von Würzburg. *Partenopier und Meliur*. Edited by Karl Bartsch. Vienna: Braumüller, 1871.

Kramer, Heinrich, and Jacob Sprenger. *Le Marteau des sorcières.* Translated by Armand Danet. Paris: Plon, 1973.

Krappe, A. H. "Über die Quellen des Huon de Bordeaux." *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 54 (1934): 66–88.

Kristján Bersi Ólafsson. "Landvættir og álfar." *Andvari* (Fall 1962): 260–71.

Kuhn, Adalbert. "Sprachvergleichung und Urgeschichte der indogermanischen Völker, I." *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 4 (1855): 81–123.

Kuhn, Hans. "Alben." *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde,* vol. I. Berlin and New York: Gruyter, 1973, 130–32.

Kulturhistorisk Lexikon för Nordisk Medeltid. 21 vols. Malmö, Sweden: Allhem, 1982.

L'Année épigraphique 1976. Paris: P.U.F., 1980.

L'Année épigraphique 1977. Paris: P.U.F., 1981.

Langosch, Karl, ed. *Ruodlieb, Märchenepen, Lateinische Epik des Mittelalters mit deutschen Versen*. Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967.

Larrington, Carolyne, trans. *The Poetic Edda.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Lecouteux, Claude. *Demons and Spirits of the Land.* Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2015.

———. "Des Königs Ortnit Schlaf." *Euphorion* 75 (1979): 347–55.

———. *Encyclopedia of Norse and Germanic Folklore, Mythology, and Magic.* Translated by Jon E. Graham. Edited by Michael Moynihan. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2016.

———. “Hagazussa-Striga-Hexe.” *Étude germaniques* 38 (1983), 161–78. Reprinted and completed in *Hessiche Blätter für Volks-und Kulturforschung* 18 (1985): 57–70.

———. “Introduction au Merveilleux médiéval.” *Études germaniques* 36 (1981): 273–90.

———. *Kleine Texte zur Alexandersage.* Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1984.

———. *La Légende de Siegfried d’après la Chanson de Seyfried à la Peau-de-Corne et la Saga de Thidrek de Vérone.* Paris: Le Porte-Glaive, 1995. Besançon, La Volva, 2015.

———. *Les Monstres dans la littérature allemande de Moyen Âge.* 3 vols. Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1982. Revised second edition in one volume. Besançon : La Völva, 2016.

———. “Le trésor des Nibelungen.” *Medieval Folklore* 3 (1994): 67–89.

———. “Les Panotéens: Sources Diffusion, Emploi.” *Études germaniques* 35 (1980): 253–66.

———. *Phantom Armies of the Night.* Rochester, Vt.: 2001.

———. “Les Pierres magiques et le Merveilleux.” In *Deutsch-Franzosische Germanistik Mélanges pour G. E. Zink.* Edited by Sieglinde Hartmann and Claude Lecouteux. Göppingen, Germany: Kümmerle, 1984, 53–67.

———. “Mara-Ephialtes-Incubus: le cauchemar chez les peuples germaniques.” *Études germaniques* 42 (1987): 1–24.

———. *Mélusine et le Chevalier au Cygne.* Paris: Payot, 1982. New edition, Paris: Imago, 1997.

———. “Nicchus-Nix.” *Euphorion* 78 (1984): 280–88.

———, ed. *Nos Bons Voisins: Nains, elfes, lutons, gnomes, kobolds et compagnie.* Paris: Corti, 2010.

———. “Notes sur Isabras.” *Romania* 103 (1982): 82–87.

———. *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind.* Translated by Jon E. Graham. Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2009.

———. “Une singulière conception de l’âme: remarques sur l’arrière-

plan de quelques traditions populaires.” *Medieval Folklore* 2 (1992): 21–47.

———. “Vom Schrat zum Schrättel: Dämonisierungs-, Mythologisierungs-und Euphemisierungsprozeß einer volkstümliche Vorstellung.” *Euphorion* 79 (1985): 95–108.

———. “Zwerge und Verwandte.” *Euphorion* 75 (1981): 366–78.

Lecouteux, Claude, and Phillipe Marcq. *Les Esprits et les Morts: croyances médiévales.* Paris: Champion, 1990.

Lecoy de la Marche, Albert. *Anecdotes historiques, légendes et apologues tirés du Recueil inédit d’Étienne de Bourbon, dominicain du XIIIe siècle.* Paris: Renouard, 1886.

Le Goff, Jacques. *La Naissance du Purgatoire.* Paris: Gallimard, 1981.

———. *L’Imaginaire médiéval.* Paris: Gallimard, 1985.

———. *Pour un autre Moyen Âge.* Paris: Gallimard, 1977.

Legros, E. “A propos des lutins et des fées.” *La Vie Wallonne* 23 (1949): 183–90.

Lehrs, F. S. *Hesidodi Carmina.* Paris: Didot, 1841.

Lexer, Matthias von. *Kärntisches Wörterbuch.* Leipzig: Hirzel, 1862.

Lid, N. “Um Finnskot og Alvskot.” *Maal og Minne* (1921): 37–66.

Liebrecht, Felix, ed. *Des Gervasius von Tilbury Otia imperialia.* Hannover, Germany: Rümpler, 1856.

Lindig, Erika. *Hausgeister: Die vorstellungen übernatürlicher Schützer und Helfer in der deutschen Sagenüberlieferung.* Frankfurt: Lang, 1987.

Linhart, Dagmar. *Hausgeister in Franken: Zur Phänomenologie, Überlieferrunggeschichte und gelehrten Deutung bestimmter hilfreicher oder schädlicher Sagengestalten.* Dettelbach, Germany: Röll, 1995.

Lods, Jeanne. *Le Roman de Perceforest.* Geneva and Lille, France: Droz, 1951.

Lorenz, Gottfried, ed. *Gylfaginning: Texte, Übersetzung, Kommentar.* Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984.

Loth, Joseph, trans. *Les Mabinogion.* Paris: Thorin, 1889.

Lütjens, August. *Der Zwerg in der deutschen Heldendichtung.* Breslau, Germany: Marcus, 1911.

Mabillon, Jean. *Vetera analecta.* Paris: Montalant, 1723.

Map, Walter. *De nugis curialium.* Edited and translated by M. R.

James, C. N. L. Brooke, and R. A. B. Mynors. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

Markale, Jean. *L'Épopée celtique en Bretagne.* Paris: Payot, 1971.

Marliave, Olivier de. *Petit Dictionnaire de mythologies basque et pyrénéene*. Paris: Entente, 1993.

Martin, Ernst, ed. *Deutsches Heldenbuch.* 5 vols. Berlin: Weidmann, 1866.

Martineau, Anne. *Le Nain et le Chevalier. Essai sur les nains français du Moyen Âge.* Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne (Traditions & Croyances), 2003.

———. *Les Nains dans la littérature arthurienne française du Moyen Âge.* 3 vols. Thesis, University of Paris-IV-Sorbonne, 2003.

Marx, Jean. *La Littérature arthurienne et le Graal.* Paris: P.U.F., 1952.

Mastrelli, Carlo Alberto. "Un'etimologia inedita di F. de Saussure: Il Nome degli 'Elfi.'" *Studi Germanici* 13 (1975): 5–14.

Mdluli, Hyacinth. *Recherche d'une structuration de l'espace romanesque: les mouvements de descente et d'ascension dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes.* Thesis, University of Paris-Sorbonne, 1991.

Ménard, P. "Une Parole rituelle dans la chevauchée fantastique de la Mesnie Hellequin." In *Mélanges R. Fromilhague.* Toulouse, France: Université de Toulouse-le Mirail, 1984, 1–11.

Meslin, Michel, ed. *Le Merveilleux: L' imaginaire et les croyances en Occident.* Paris: Bordas, 1984.

Meves, Uwe. *Studien zu König Rother, Herzog Ernst und Grauer Rock (Orendel).* Frankfurt/Main and Bern: Lang, 1976.

Meyer, Elard Hugo. *Mythologie der Germanen.* Straßburg: Trübner, 1903.

Meyer-Benfey, Heinrich, ed. *Mittelhochdeutsche Übungstexte.* 2nd edition. Halle (Saale), Germany: Niemeyer, 1920.

Micha, Alexandre, ed. *Lancelot: Roman en prose du XIIIe siècle.* 9 vols. Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1978–83.

Migne, Jacques-Paul. *Patrologia Graeca.* 161 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857–1866.

———. *Patrologia Latina.* 221 vols. Paris: Migne, 1841–1865.

Motz, Lotte. *The Wise One of the Mountain: Form, Function, and Significance of the Subterranean Smith, a Study in Folklore.* Göppingen,

Germany: Kümmerle, 1983.

———. *Du nain au nain de jardin.* Brussels: Fondation Marinus, 2000.

Neckel, Gustav, ed. *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern,* vol. I (Text). Heidelberg: Winter, 1914.

Nickel, Gerhard, ed. *Beowulf und die kleineren Denkmäler der altenglischen Heldensage Waldere und Finnsburg*. 3 vols. Heidelberg: Winter, 1976.

Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentis septentrionalibus.* Rome: N.p., 1555.

Olrik, Axel. "Myterne om Loke." In *Festskrift til H. F. Feilberg. Danske Studier* 8 (1911): 548–93.

Panzer, Friedrich, ed. *Merlin und Seifrid de Ardemont von Albrecht von Scharfenberg*. Tübingen, Germany: Bibliothek des litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 1902.

Paracelsus. *Werke.* Edited by Will-Erich Peuckert. 5 vols. Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967.

Perridon, H. Review of *Florilegium Nordicum: En bukett nordiska språk-och namnstudier tillägnade Sigurd Fries den 22 april 1984. Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 23 (1985): 207–9.

Pfister, Friedrich. *Kleine Schriften zum Alexanderroman.* Meisenheim am Glan, Germany: Hain, 1975.

Pinon, Roger. "D'un dieu gaulois à un nain malmédien: étymologie et sémantique de *dûhon*." *Ollodagos* III (1992): 237–306.

Pliny the Elder. *The Natural History.* Translated by John Bostock and Henry T. Riley. 6 vols. London: Bohn, 1855–1857.

Poetic Edda. See Neckel, ed., for original texts; Larrington for English translations.

Poirion, Daniel. *Le Merveilleux au Moyen Âge.* Paris: P.U.F., 1982.

Pons, Emile, ed. *Sire Gauvain et le Chevalier Vert.* Paris: Aubier, 1946.

Prior, O. H., ed. *L'Image du Monde de Maitre Gossouin.* Lausanne and Paris: Payot, 1913.

Ranke, Kurt, ed. *Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung.* Berlin: Gruyter, 1999.

Raymond, E. "Artus Kampf mit dem Katzenungestüm," in *Mélanges G. Gröber.* Halle, 1899, 311–96.

Reichborn-Kjennerud, Ingjald. “Den gamle dvergetro,” In *Studia germanica tillägnade Ernst Albin* Kock *den 6 December 1934.* Lund: Blom, 1934, 278–88.

———. “Den norske Dvergetradition.” *Norske Folkekultur* 20 (1934): 85–141.

———. *Vår gamle Trolldomsmedisin.* Osolo: Dybwad, 1928–1948

Renaud, G. “Le Peuple surnaturel des Shetland.” *Artus* 21–22 (1986): 28–32.

Riegler, Richard. “Romanische Namen des Alpdrucks (Incubus),” *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen* 167 (1935): 55–63.

Robert de Boron. *Merlin, roman du XIIIe siècle.* Edited by Alexandre Micha. Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1980.

Rohde, Erwin. *Psyché: Le culte de l’ âme chez les Grecs et leur croyance à l’ immortalité.* Paris: Pavot, 1928.

Rossi, Marguerite. *Huon de Bordeaux et l’Évolution du genre épique au XIIIe siècle.* Paris: Champion, 1975.

———. “Sur Picolet et Aubéron dans la *Bataille Loquifer*.” *Mélanges J. WatheletWillem.* Liège, Belgium: Marche Romane, 1978, 569–91.

Ruelle, Pierre, ed. *Huon de Bordeaux.* Brussels and Paris: Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles / Presses Universitaires de France, 1960.

Ruhe, Doris. *Gelehrtes Wissen, “Aberglaube” und pastorale Praxis im französischen Spätmittelalter: Der Second Lucidaire und seine Rezeption (14.–17. Jh).* Würzburg, Germany: Reichert, 1993.

Salus, Peter H., and Paul B. Taylor. “*Eikinskjaldi*, *Fjalarr* and *Eggþér*: Notes on Dwarves and Giants in the *Völuspá*.” *Neophilologus* 53 (1969): 76–81.

Saxo Grammaticus. *Gesta Danorum.* Edited by J. Olrik and H. Raeder. 2 vols. Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1931.

———. *The History of the Danes, Books I–IX.* Edited by Hilda Ellis Davidson. Translated by Peter Fisher. Woodbridge, UK: Brewer, 1996.

Scheludko, Dimitri. “Neues über Huon de Bordeaux.” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 48 (1928): 361–97.

Schmitt, Jean-Claude. “La Fabrique des Saints.” *Annales E. S. C.* (March–April 1984): 286–300.

———. “Les Masques, le Diable, les Morts dans l’Occident médiéval.” *Semiotica* 136/37 (1984): 1–27.

———. “Les Traditions folkloriques dans la culture médiévale.”

Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions 52 (1981): 5–20.

———. “Temps, Folklore et Politique au XIIe siècle.” *Le Temps chrétien de la fin de l’Antiquité au Moyen Âge (IIIe–XIIIe siècles).* Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984, 489–515.

Schneegans, Frédéric-Édouard. “Neptunus-lutin.” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 24 (1900): 557–64.

Schneider, Fedor. *Iohannis abbatis Victoriensis Liber certarum historiarum.* MGH, SS 36. Hanover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1909–1910.

Schröder, Franz Rolf. “Die Wielandsage.” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 99 (1977): 375–94.

Schuermans, H. “Neptune et Nutons.” *Wallonia* 10 (1902): 89–92.

Schwarzfischer, Karl. *Zur Frage der Schrazellöcher oder Erdställe: Schriftliche Zeugnisse, Mythologie, kulturkundlicher Vergleich, Aussage v. Ortsnamen.* Weiden: Knauf, 1968.

Scott, Walter. *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft.* London: Routledge, 1885.

Sébillot, Paul. *Le Folklore de France.* 4 vols. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1968. Reprinted in 8 volumes. Paris: Imago, 1982.

Sikes, Wirt. *British Goblins: Welsh FolkLore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions.* London: Sampson Low et al., 1880.

Smith, Kirby Flower. “An Historical Study of the Werwolf in Literature.” *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 9/1 (1894): 1–42.

Snorri Sturluson. *Heimskringla I: The Beginnings to Óláfr Tryggvason.* Translated by Alison Finlay and Anthony Faulkes. London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2011.

———. *The Prose Edda.* Translated by Jesse L. Byock. London and New York: Penguin, 2005.

Staines, David, trans. *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Starck, Taylor, and J. C. Wells. *Althochdeutsches Glossenwörterbuch.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1971–1984.

Steinmeyer, Elias von, and Eduard Sievers. *Die althochdeutschen Glossen.* 5 vols. Berlin: Weidmann, 1879–1922.

Sterckx, Claude. “Nûtons, Lûtons et dieux celtes,” *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 46/1 (1994): 39–79.

Storms, Godfrid. *Anglo-Saxon Magic.* The Hague: Nijhoff, 1948.

Strabo. *The Geography of Strabo.* Translated by H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer. 3 vols. London: George Bell & Sons. 1903.

Strasmann, Gilbert, ed. *Konrad Steckels deutsche Übertragung der Reise nach China des Odorico de Pordenone.* Berlin: Schmidt, 1968.

Stuart, Heather. "The Anglo-Saxon Elf." *Studia Neophilologica* 48 (1976): 313–20.

Suard, François, trans. *Histoire de Huon de Bordeaux et Aubéron, roi de féerie.* Paris: Stock, 1983.

Subrenat, Jean, ed. *Le Roman d'Auberon, Prologue de "Huon de Bordeaux."* Geneva and Paris: Droz/Minard, 1973.

Szkilnik, Michelle. "Deux héritiers de Merlin au XIVe siècle: le luiton Zéphir et le nain Tronc." *Le moyen français* 43 (1999): 77–97.

Tacitus. *La Germanie* [*Germania*]. Edited and translated by Jacques Perret. Paris: Société d'Edition Les Belles Lettres, 1967.

Tarentul, Evgen. *Elfen, Zwerge und Riesen: Untersuchung zur Vorstellungswelt germanischer Völker im Mittelalter*. Frankfurt: Lang, 2001.

Thomas of Cantimpré. *Bonum universale de apibus.* Douai, France: N.p., 1627.

Thun, Nils. "The Malignant Elves." *Studia Neophilologica* 41 (1969): 378–96.

Tonnelat, E. "Le Roi Orendel et la Tunique sans couture du Christ." In *Mélanges Charles Andler. Strasbourg: 1924, 351–70.*

Trillmich, Werner, ed. *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches.* Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973.

Unger, C. R., ed. *Saga Ðiðriks konungs af Bern*. Christiania [Oslo]: Feilberg & Landmarks, 1853.

Van Kirk Dobbie, Elliot, ed. *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1942.

Victorin, Patricia. "Un nain et un papegau: des nuances de Merlin au XVe siècle dans *Ysaïe le Triste* et *Le Chevalier au Papegau.*" *L'Esplumeoir* 1 (2002): 41–55.

Von der Hagen, Friedrich Heinrich. *Gesammtabenteuer.* 3 vols. Stuttgart and Tübingen, Germany: Cotta, 1850.

Voretzsch, Carl. *Die Composition des Huon von Bordeaux nebst*

kritischen Bemerkungen über Begriff und Bedeutung der Sage. Halle (Saale), Germany: Niemeyer, 1900.

Vries, Jan de. *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte.* 2 vols. Berlin: Gruyter, 1956.

———. *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch.* Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1962.

———. *La Religion des Celtes.* Translated by Laurent Jospin. Paris: Payot, 1963.

———. *The Problem of Loki.* Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1933.

———. "Über das Wort *Jarl* und seine Verwandten." *La Nouvelle Clio* 6 (1954): 461–69.

———. "Über Sigvats Álfablót-Strophen." *Acta Philologica Scandinavica* 7 (1932): 169–80.

———. "Van Alven en Elfen." *Nederlandisch Tijdschrift voor Volkskunde* 36 (1931): 3–30.

Wadstein, Elis. "Alfer ock älvor: En språkligt-mytologisk undersökning." In *Uppsalastudier tillegnade Sophus Bugge.* Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1892, 152–79.

Walz, M., ed. *Garel von dem blühenden Tal.* Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany: Wagner, 1892.

Wartburg, Walther von, ed. *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch.* Online at: https://apps.atilf.fr/lecteurFEW/index.php/site/index (accessed April 10, 2018).

Wierschin, Martin, ed. *Eckenlied, Fassung L.* Tübingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1974.

Wildhaber, Robert. *Der Altersvers des Wechselbalges und die übrigen Altersverse.* Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1985.

William of Auvergne. *De Universo.* Paris: N.p., 1674.

Wilson, John, ed. *Samsons saga fagra.* Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 65.1. Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1953.

Wohlgemuth, Fritz. *Riesen und Zwerge in der altfranzösischen erzählenden Dichtung.* Dissertation, Tübingen, Germany, 1906.

Wolf, Ferdinand. *Über die Lais, Sequenzen und Leiche.* Heidelberg: Winter, 1841.

Wright, Thomas. *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies.* 2nd

edition revised by R. P. Wülker. 2 vols. London: Trübner, 1884.

Zink, Georges. *Le Wunderer: Fac-similé de l' édition de 1503.* Paris: Aubier, 1949.

GLOSSARY

Æsir: Sovereign gods; the two gods most representative of the Æsir are Odin and Thor.

Afanc: The name of a race of Celtic dwarfs that is very likely quite archaic, with an etymological connection to water.

Álfablót: "Sacrifice to the Elves"; another name for *Jól* (Yule), the winter solstice celebration with which rites of the Third Function, death, and elves are associated.

Álfheimr: "World of the Elves"; name of one of the celestial homes of the Nordic pantheon, associated with the god Freyr.

Asgard: "Domain of the Æsir"; designates the world of the gods as opposed to the world of the dwarfs and giants (Útgard) and the world of men (Midgard).

Chaufaton: The name of a household spirit in Upper Savoy. It is a sprite and a nightmare.

Duse: A small Gallic deity; it became the spirit for the enclosed space, then was conflated with fauns, satyrs, and other woodland creatures.

Dvergr (Old Norse; MHG zwerc, OE dweorg): The dwarf proper, which is to say a wicked and often ugly creature. It was regularly confused with the elf.

Eoten (ON jötunn): Etymologically speaking, this is an "eater," an ogre. In Norse mythology, it is a giant. This figure goes back to an archaic stage of Germanic traditions, and its presence is attested in Scandinavia, England, and Germany, but in these last two areas it was a fossilized term by the time of the Middle Ages.

Faunus: During the Middle Ages, "faun" was used by writers of the Latin language to designate the little creatures of the lower mythology, just as were "satyr" and "Hairy One."

Gardsvor: "Guardian of the estate"; one of the names for a household spirit in Scandinavia. Its duties are close to those of the three types of Roman*Sylvanus (*domesticus, agrestis, orientalis).

Huldufólk (Old Norse, "hidden people"): name given to dwarfs (in the generic sense) in Scandinavia. The noun *hulda* reflects the meaning of "hiding, secrecy."

Kobold: Originally this was the name for a small household idol that

later became a household spirit similar to the Roman sprite.

Korr/Gorr: Name of a race of Celtic dwarfs; the name has survived in the Armorican word *korrigans.*

Leprechauns: Literally meaning "small bodies," this is the name given to dwarfs in Celtic literature and perhaps corresponding to the Latin *pumilio.*

Lutin (Sprite): A figure connected to water, characterized by its power to transform its shape. It commonly assumes the form of a handsome man, a fish, or a horse. While it does not correspond to an elf or dwarf in every respect, it possesses several of their features.

Mahr (mar): The name for the entity hidden behind the night-*mare,* whose French name, *cauchemar,* literally translates to "the trampling by the *Mahr*" (which can be male or female). From an etymological perspective, it is a dead person. It was conflated with the demonized elves and later supplanted them.

Nixie (Nicker, nix, nixe): A name for water spirits who have human or animal forms; most often they are dangerous. Assimilated with dwarfs, the *nixie* rarely appeared in the Middle Ages and without any precision.

Pûca (puck, púki, pooka, etc.): The name of a spirit that the Germans most likely borrowed from the Celts at a later date. It was regarded as a devil, dwarf, and revenant.

Sylvanus: A name given to the denizens of the lower mythology in Latin texts.

Thurses: The name of a race of giants that was once common throughout the entire Germanic region but disappeared before the year 1000 except among the Nordic people.

Trolls: The name of a race of giants about whom nothing is known; in the Middle Ages they were often seen as devils; they have become dwarfs in recent folklore.

Trute: The name of a nightmare in southern Germany during the Middle Ages.

Vættir (pl., "wights"): A collective name designating all the guardian spirits of the land.

Vanir: The second race of gods in the Germanic pantheon; the best known are Njörðr, Freyr, and Freya. They rule over the Third Function.

About the Author

CLAUDE LECOUTEUX is a former professor of medieval literature and civilization at the Sorbonne. He is the author of numerous books on medieval and pagan afterlife beliefs and magic, including *The Book of Grimoires*, *Dictionary of Ancient Magic Words and Spells*, and *The Tradition of Household Spirits*. He lives in Paris.

About Inner Traditions • Bear & Company

Founded in 1975, Inner Traditions is a leading publisher of books on indigenous cultures, perennial philosophy, visionary art, spiritual traditions of the East and West, sexuality, holistic health and healing, self-development, as well as recordings of ethnic music and accompaniments for meditation.

In July 2000, Bear & Company joined with Inner Traditions and moved from Santa Fe, New Mexico, where it was founded in 1980, to Rochester, Vermont. Together Inner Traditions • Bear & Company have eleven imprints: Inner Traditions, Bear & Company, Healing Arts Press, Destiny Books, Park Street Press, Bindu Books, Bear Cub Books, Destiny Recordings, Destiny Audio Editions, Inner Traditions en Español, and Inner Traditions India.

For more information or to browse through our more than one thousand titles in print and ebook formats, visit www.InnerTraditions.com.

Become a part of the Inner Traditions community to receive special offers and members-only discounts.

BOOKS OF RELATED INTEREST

Dictionary of Gypsy Mythology
Charms, Rites, and Magical Traditions of the Roma
by Claude Lecouteux
Traditional Magic Spells for Protection and Healing
by Claude Lecouteux
Encyclopedia of Norse and Germanic Folklore, Mythology, and Magic
by Claude Lecouteux
Dictionary of Ancient Magic Words and Spells
From Abraxas to Zoar
by Claude Lecouteux
The Tradition of Household Spirits
Ancestral Lore and Practices
by Claude Lecouteux
The Book of Grimoires
The Secret Grammar of Magic
by Claude Lecouteux
Demons and Spirits of the Land
Ancestral Lore and Practices
by Claude Lecouteux
A Lapidary of Sacred Stones
Their Magical and Medicinal Powers Based on the Earliest Sources
by Claude Lecouteux

INNER TRADITIONS • BEAR & COMPANY
P.O. Box 388
Rochester, VT 05767
1-800-246-8648
www.InnerTraditions.com
Or contact your local bookseller

Inner Traditions

One Park Street
Rochester, Vermont 05767
www.InnerTraditions.com

Copyright © 2013 by Éditions Imago
English translation copyright © 2018 by Inner Traditions International
Originally published in French under the title *Les Nains et les Elfes au Moyen Âge* by Éditions Imago First U.S. edition published in 2018 by Inner Traditions All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Names: Lecouteux, Claude, author.

Title: The hidden history of elves and dwarfs : avatars of invisible dreams / Claude Lecouteux ; translated by Jon E. Graham.

Other titles: Nains et les elfes au Moyen Age. English Description: First U.S. edition. | Rochester, Vermont : Inner Traditions, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index Identifiers: LCCN 2018001205 (print) | LCCN 2018029101 (ebook) | ISBN 9781620557150 (hardcover : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781620557167 (ebook) Subjects: LCSH: Dwarfs (Folklore) | Dwarfs (Folklore) in literature. | Elves. | Fiction, Medieval—History and criticism. | Mythology in literature. | Folklore—Europe.

Classification: LCC GR550 .L3813 2018 (print) | LCC GR550 (ebook) | DDC 398.2094—dc23

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018001205

Inner Traditions wishes to express its appreciation for assistance given by the government of France through the National Book Office of the Ministère de la Culture in the preparation of this translation.

Nous tenons à exprimer nos plus vifs remerciements au gouvernement de la France et au ministère de la Culture, Centre National du Livre, pour leur concours dans la préparation de la traduction de cet ouvrage.

INDEX

All page numbers are refer to the print edition of this title.

Abry, Christian, 144–45, 173–74
Acephali, 12
Adam, 12
Æsir, 87, 96–97, 106–7
Æthelberht, King, 129
Agrapart the Bearded One, 15–16
Alban, 79
Alberic, 61–62
Alberîch, 4, 48–54, 54–60, *59*, 71–73
Alexander the Great, 38
Álfheimr, 114–15
Álfrikr, 60–61, 63
Amauri, 30–31
Amilien, Virginie, 173
Andvari, 52–53, 65, 72, 94–95
Arthur, King, 64–65, 82
Asgard, 101, 114
Aubéron (Oberon), 2–4, 15
    conclusions about, 71–73
    Huon and, 30–37
    magical objects, 37–47
    relatives of, 63–69
    true nature of, 122–26
Augustine, Saint, 9, 12, 148
Avalon, 38
Avesta, 79
Balmung (sword), 49
Bataille Loquifer, 63–65
Beowulf, 130
Bertrand, 64
Bibliotheca, *9–10*
Bifurr, 22
Billunc, 79
birth, of dwarfs, 83–87

Biterolf and Dietrich, 49–50
Black Book of Camarthen, The, 21
blacksmiths, dwarf, 43
Bourchier, John, 2–3
bow, 39–40
Boyer, Régis, 96
Bridinno, 11
Brocéliande, 5–6
Brothers Grimm, 2, 5
brownies, 1–2
Brünhild, 49
Burchard of Worms, 163
Burgundians, 51
Caesar, Julius, 38, 115
Cairo, 33
Campbell, J. F., 5
Canterbury Tales, 2–3
Cathedral of Saint Lazarus, 11
Cathedral of Trier, 43
Catherine of Medici, 13
Cat's Tooth, 65
cauldron, magical, 20–21
cauldron of Dagda, 46
Celander, Hilding, 101
Celtic literature, 19–24
chair, the, 37–39
Chanson de Roland, 44
Charlemagne, 1, 30–31
Charlot, 30–31
Chrétien de Troyes, 16–17, 18–19, 81
Christians and Christianity, 2, 68–69, 86, 147
clergymen, 4
Cnu Dheireoil, 23
Colloquy of the Ancients, 21, 23
Comains, 31–32
Corr, Ruddlwn, 23
craftsmanship, 93–95

Croker, T. Crofton, 5
cross, sign of, 19
Cross, Tom Peete, 20
Culhwch and Olwen, 22–23
cultic worship, 109
Cynocephali, 12
Dagda, 120
dead, the, 89–93, 110–11
death, 107
de Boron, Robert, 82
de Brie, Graindor, 64
de Guyse, Jacques, 61–62
de Metz, Gossouin, 8
Desramé, 64
divination, 19
Dumézil, Georges, x, 4–5, 98–99, 119–20
Duodlieb, King, 43
Durinn, 79–80, 84
Durnir, 81
duses, 147–52
Dvalinn, 79–80
dwarfism, types of, 14, 24
dwarfs, 1–2
    assessment of the research, 172–76
    birth of, 83–87
    in Celtic literature, 19–24
    conclusions about, 71–73, 169–71
    craftsmanship and, 93–95
    explanations of, 76–80
    in Germanic literature, 24–29
    gods and, 95–102
    illness and, 131–35
    medieval belief in, 8–14
    names of, 87–89
    in Romance literature, 15–19
    size of, 80–83
    stones and the dead, 89–93

threads and, 135–37
types of, 22–23, 26
Dysgl, 46
Eckard, Gilles, 175
Eckenlied, 6060
Eglantine, 67
Egypt, 11
Eiddilic the Dwarf, 23
Elfland, 166–68
elves, 1–2, 53–54
assessment of the research, 172–76
black elves and dark elves, 110–13
conclusions about, 169–71
cultural perspective on, 108–10
and the dead, 110–11
demonization of, 128–31, 137–46
elves of light, 106–8
illness and, 131–35
in the land of, 120–22
philology of, 103–6
prince of, 113–16
swan maidens and, 117–20
Thor and, 116–17
Enotocoitians, 32
epilepsy, 131
Esclarmonde, 37
Eternal Battle, 92–93
Ethiopia, 11
exorcism, 19
Fáfnir, 52
Fail-naught, 39
fauns, 151–52, 165
Feilberg, Henning F., 166–67
Femenia, 31
Fenrir, 94
Fergus mac Léti, 20–21, 44
festival of Pentecost, 30–31

Fierabras, 42
First Function, x, 46–47
Fjalarr, 79, 81, 94
Folie Tristan de Berne, 63–64
Fontaine, Jacques, 149
Frappier, Jean, 19
Freyr, x, 106–7, 108, 109, 114, 116
Fritzlar, Herbort von, 137, 138
Gae Bolga, 40
Galarr, 79, 81, 94
Gaudisse, 31, 36–37
Gaufrey, 65–69, 72–73
Gauvain, 82
Gawain, Sir, 122, 135–36
genius catabuli, 157–60
Gerald of Wales, 121
Gérard, 30–31
Gériaume, 32–33, 34
Germanic lexicon, 129–31
Germanic literature, 24–29
Gervase, 70
Gervase of Tilbury, 152–53, 165
Gesta Danorum, 82, 86–87
giants, 41, 82–83
gifts of God, 68–69
Gildas, 16–17
Gleipnir, 94
Gloriant, 35
goblins, 1–2, 135
God, 19, 86
gods, dwarfs and, 95–102
Gorr, Gwyddolwyn, 22–23
Gossouin de Metz. *See* de Metz, Gossouin Grafenberg, Wirnt von, 42
Graindor de Brie. *See* de Brie, Graindor Grambo, Ronald, 174, 175
Great Flood, 23
Greene, Robert, 2–3
Green Knight, 122

Gregory the Great, 129
Grimm, Jacob, 104
Gringalet, 63–65
Guillaume, 64
Guinivere, Queen, 18
Guivret, 17
Gunnar, 82
Gunther, 49
Gylfaginning, 83, 88, 98
Hagen, 51
Ham, 23
hamper, 45–46
hanap, 36, 44–46
Harward, V. J., 20
hauberk, 40–44
hedges, 150–51
Heimskringla, 90, 142
Hel-shoes, 20–21
Heriburg, 24–25
Herla, King, 91–92
Herodotus, 9
Hincmar of Reims, 149
Holy Land, 31
Homer, 9
Honorius of Autun, 11
horn, 46–47
Howler, 160–66
Hreidmar, King, 51
Hugo of Mons, 136–37, 164
Huld, 142
Huon, 3–4, 30–37, 40–42, 123
Huon de Bordeaux, 30, 64–65, 73, 125
hypnalis, 58
illness, 131–35
India, 11
invisibility, 28
Isle of Apples, 38

Isle of Britain, 22–23
Isle of Moses, 37
Jacques de Guyse. *See* de Guyse, Jacques Jente, Richard, 105
Joachim, 42
Joisten, Charles, 144–45, 173–74
jongleurs, 4
Journeys of the Tuath Luchra and the Death of Fergus, The, 20
Kennedy, Patrick, 5
Knight of the Cart, The, 18–19
Knights of the Round Table, 16–17
kobolds, 156–57
Koll, 23
Korranyeit, 22–23
Kriemhild, 49
Kuhn, Adalbert, 104
Künhild, 28
Kvasir, 79, 94
La Houppe ‘Albertmont, 62
Land of Faith, 33
Langenstein, Hugo von, 13–14
Lapps, 11
Laurin, King, 26–27, 28, 79
Leo of Naples, 38
Léti, Fergus mac. *See* Fergus mac Léti *Letter of Prester John, The*, 33, 39
light elves, 106–7
Lindig, Erika, 172–73
Linhart, Dagmar, 172–73
Loch Luchra, 21
Loki, 51–52, 82, 97, 98, 99–102, 136
Lombardy throne, 57, 59–60, 124
Lorandin, 43
Lugh, 45
MacCulloch, John A., 22
Machorel, 58
madness, 131
magical objects, 37–47, 54–56

Magnificat, 87
Mahr, 141–45
Maillefer, 64
Malabron, 63–69, 65, 72–73
Malek-al-Adel, 54
Map, Walter, 91, 167–68
Megasthenes, 10
Ménard, Phillipe, 154
Módsognir, 84
Mongols, 32
Montnuble, 64
Morungen, Heinrich von, 137–38
Munre, Rüdiger von, 142–43
names, of dwarfs, 87–89
Nart Sagas, 45
Natural History, 10–11
Nibelung, 48–49, 50
Nibelungenlied, 51, 52–53, 72, 124–25
Nibelungs, 73
nightmare, 140–46
Noah, 23
Oberon, 3
Odin, x–xi, 51, 81, 93, 116
Olivier, 42
Olrik, Axel, 101
Orendel, 79
Orgueilleux, 36, 37, 40–41, 44
Ortnit, 71–72
Ortnit, King, 26, 54–60, 68
Otolicnians, 33
Otr, 52–53
paganism, 2, 16, 128–29, 147
pans, 151–52
Perceforest, 69–70
Peredur, 21–22
Photios I, 9–10
Picolet, 63–65

Pliny the Elder, 9, 10–11
Poetic Edda, xii, 51, 83, 87–88, 114, 116, 119
poison, 38, 39
Pokorny, Julius, 78
Procopius, 20
Prose Edda, 83
Prose Lancelot, 16
pygmies, medieval belief in, 8–14
Quint, Charles, 13
Ragnarok, 94, 97
rape, 56–57
Reginn, 52, 81–82, 98
Rhys, John, 22
Riegler, Richard, 141
ring, 54–56
Robastre, 65–66, 66–67, 68
Robert de Boron. *See* de Boron, Robert Roland, 42
Romance literature, 15–19
Rossi, Marguerite, 38, 39
Roudié, Émile, 3
Ruelle, Pierre, 71–72
Ruodlieb, 24–26
Ruodlieb, 24–26, 61
Saussure, Ferdinand de, 104
Saxo Grammaticus, 82, 86–87
Scheludko, Dimitri, 42–43
Schilbung, 48–49, 50
Schrat, 160–66
Schröder, Franz Rolf, 115–16
Schuermans, H., 154
Scott, Walter, 168
Scottish History of James IV, 2–3
Sébile, 40
Sébillot, Paul, 157
Second Function, x, 86, 116
servants, 25
Siegfried, 48–54, 53

Sigurðr, 82
size, of dwarfs, 80–83
Skáldskaparmál, 79, 83
Skiapodes, 12
Snorri Sturluson, 79, 83, 84–85, 90, 106–7, 111–13, 119, 142
Sökkmímir, 81
Solinus, 9, 11
Song of Solomon, 79
soul, 53
spiders, 100–101
spirits, 33, 80–81
sprites, 1–2, 152–56
stones, 89–93
Story of the Grail, The, 21–22
strength, 27
supernaturalism, 41
superstitions, 33
Svafrlami, King, 79–80, 80
Svergðir, King, 90–91
swan maidens, 117–20
Sylve Charbonnière, 5–6
Taliesin, 21
Theodoric of Bern, 60
Theodoric of Verona, 27, 91
Theodoric the Great, 159
Thidrekr, 60
Third Function, x, xii, 21, 46–47, 57, 86, 96–97, 116–17, 157, 160
Thomas of Cantimpré, 39
Thor, 116–17
Thoralf, Reidar, 174–75
Thor’s hammer, 40
threads, 135–37
Thun, Nils, 105
tradition, twists and turns of, 1–6
treasure, 92
trial of virtue, 41–42
Tristan, 39

trolls, 81
valkyries, 118
Vanir, x, 87, 96–98, 106–7
Virgil, 85
Völundr, 80, 113–16, 117–20
Völuspá, *84*, *88*
Voretasch, Carl, 61
Vries, Jan de, 104
Wadstein, Elis, 104
Walberan, 43
Wallonia, 155
water spirits, 158–59
Wayland the Smith. *See* Völundr weapons, 94–95
Weber, Carl Maria von, 3
Welsh Triads, The, 22–23
Weltanschauung, 83
Wieland, C. M., 3
Wigalois, 42
Wildhaber, Robert, 174
Wild Hunt, 153
William of Newberry, 122
Wolfdietrich, 58, 79
World of Mist, 73
Würzburg, Konrad von, 138
Ymir, 83–84, 84–85
Ynglinga saga, 108–9
Yngvi, 108–9
Zephyr, 69–70, 72–73

Electronic edition produced by

Digital Media Initiatives